Life-Stories of Famous Men

AUGUSTE COMTE

F. J. GOULD

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AUGUSTE COMTE

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LIFE-STORIES OF FAMOUS MEN

AUGUSTE COMTE

BY

F. J. GOULD

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I

THE POLYTECHNIC "THINKER"

FROM the terraces which rise above the old city of Montpellier one may see the peaks of the Pyrenees on the south-west, the sea on the south, and the Low Alps on the east. Between the city and the Low Alps lies a region rich in memories of ancient Romans, of musical Troubadours, of the poet Mistral, and the famous entomologist Henri Fabre. In the country on the west the Albigensian heresy was born; and it died in tragedy. Cross currents of travel and commerce naturally created a spirit of inquiry at a spot where roads from Paris, Spain, and Italy met. In the fifteenth century Jacques Cœur, one of the greatest merchants and financiers of the age, here built a mansion, from the roof of which he proudly watched his ships sail towards Africa, Venice, and Aleppo. A university was founded in 1289, and students flocked to lectures on law and medicine. Petrarch the poet came to study; and Rabelais, the audacious Humanist; and Jussieu and De Candolle, botanists. A botanic garden was laid out in 1592. A century later John Locke, who gave to England a common-sense account of the Human Understanding, lived awhile at Montpellier, and, yet later, the genial Sterne.

Louis Comte, aged 20, a clerk in the offices of the Receiver-General for the Department of L'Hérault, married Rosalie Boyer, aged thirty-two, at Montpellier on the last day of the year 1796. The marriage was

a civil ceremony. France was a "Republic, one and indivisible," and the bride and bridegroom were "citizeness and citizen." They went to live in a plain, substantial house, still existing. Their children were four :—

1. Isidore Auguste Marie François Xavier, born at Montpellier, January 19, 1798; died at Paris, September 5, 1857.
2. Alix Marie, 1800–69.
3. Ermance L. Marie, who lived but three months.
4. Adolphe V. L. Marie, 1802–21, a young fellow who seems to have left home in sudden impulse, and who died in the island of Martinique.

It will be noticed that each of the four children was christened with the name of the Virgin Mary. The parents were serious Catholics. Add to that they were Royalists in sympathy.

The boy Auguste was delicate. Head and trunk were overlarge for the legs. We shall hear later of stomach disorder and short-sightedness. He devoured knowledge. His parents engaged an old gentleman to teach him reading, writing, and Latin rudiments. Auguste often knocked at the tutor's door so early in the morning that he had to wait till the good man got out of bed to admit the small enthusiast. At the age of nine the boy entered the local Lycée as a boarder and developed a marvellous industry. He revered the teachers, but had a prejudice against ushers and officials. His rebellions brought penalties which he bore with a proud stoicism. A tumour on the neck necessitated an operation, which he endured without cry or recoil, refusing to have his hands held. During seven years he carried off prizes for Latin and mathematics, racing through algebra, the method of Newton, the method of Lagrange, trigonometry, conic sections, and the rest. When the mathematics master, Daniel Encontre, a worthy and somewhat

notable Protestant, fell ill in 1814, young Comte temporarily took his place. The precocious teacher's legs being short, he mounted a chair while instructing his class. At this period he had already passed examinations which qualified him for admission to the celebrated Polytechnic School at Paris, but was too young to be registered. The Spaniards were resisting the oppressions of Napoleon when Auguste was ten or eleven years of age. The boy openly declared to his school-fellows that he hoped the Spaniards would succeed. He adopted republicanism, and remained republican all through his life. Most of the teachers in the Lycée were Voltairean in spirit, but when Napoleon favoured the Catholic Church they outwardly conformed, much to Comte's disgust. Comte's names included those of saints—Isidore, etc.—and the Virgin Mary; but he declined to go to church. Many years later, when writing to his aged father, he recalled the beginning of his Freethought: "You know that from the age of fourteen I had of my own accord ceased to believe in God." Many years later, again, he told another correspondent, in a somewhat solemn manner, of a "unique and early experience of veritable love, which was stifled in its primitive germ" by the girl's marriage to another. This young lady was a certain Ernestine Goy. Thirty-four years afterwards they exchanged pleasant letters, and she told the philosopher how she was now toothless, wrinkled, sallow, grey-haired, stooping, and nevertheless thrilled at the memory of his boyish voice begging her to sing him a song!

In October, 1814, the stage-coach carried our learned youth to Paris, and he entered the Polytechnic School. In Paris he lived till death, save for official tours as an examiner and for visits, not too frequent, to Montpellier; and he never travelled out of France. Paris still

vividly remembered Voltaire, Rousseau, and Diderot; still thrilled with the shock of the Revolution; and, though Napoleon was lodged in Elba, the city was not unwilling to welcome him back. England, now near the close of a hundred years' intermittent war with France, powerfully affected her generous enemy by her thought, her industry, and her Parliamentary institutions, and was herself pregnant with Chartism, Radicalism, and Owen's Socialism. The American Revolution had established ties of fraternity with the French people, and France revered the names of Washington, Franklin, Jefferson, and of that Thomas Paine who was born English, elected a member of the French Convention, and died an American citizen. The Napoleonic drama had brought the soul of France into new relations, social and scientific as well as military, with Spain, Italy, Germany, and wide lands beyond. This was the time, and Paris was the place, for the elaboration of a Humanist philosophy which essentially, and apart from its temporary forms, would permeate civilization.

Auguste had a bosom friend, Valat, at Montpellier, and his letters to Valat were a remarkable miscellany of domestic notes, passages from amorous experience, shrewd observations on the social world, and glimpses of a philosophy in the birth. To him, in January, 1815, Comte described the Polytechnic routine—the drum-beat at 5 a.m., studies in class-rooms from 5.45 to 7.30, good plain bread to break the fast (for pence one could buy warm milk or butter), descriptive geometry in the amphitheatre, private study in the class-rooms, mid-day meal ("pretty good for a public institute, and better than at the Lycées," says the young critic), recreation till 5 p.m. (to Auguste this means library and journals), more study, supper, all lights out at drum-beat, 9.15. One is easily conscious of the absence all through Comte's youth of

what may be called the Eton playing-fields motive, and of the Whitmanesque breeze and open road, though at times he walked much, in solitude, or with friends. Towards academic snobs, or bureaucratic persons, he was for ever rebellious. He told Valat, with joy, how certain mandarins—bumptious ushers—ordered the pupils to be indoors by 9.30 one evening, and how a hundred and fifty youths went to the theatre and returned at 11. The Polytechnic, he said, was truly republican; it believed in liberty—"which we know very well how to distinguish from anarchy," he gravely added. And the boy wound up a long letter with the fervent wish that the Polytechnic devotion to Reason and Humanity was universal!

Napoleon escaped from Elba, and arrived triumphantly in Paris on March 20, and audiences at theatres roared the *Marseillaise*. Auguste drew up a petition to the Emperor, which the Polytechnic lads hastened to sign; they prayed to be allowed to take part in the national defence. The Emperor visited the school, and smiled benignantly on the pupils, who were drawn up in military order, and saluted him with shouts of "Long live!" Cannon would be sent to the school; the cadets, including Auguste, might be needed for the Northern Army. All this is poured out in a news-letter to Valat, with a caution: "Don't tell my parents that I am enrolled."

A few weeks later the battle of Waterloo was fought. The Polytechnic youths rallied to the brief attempt to defend Paris against the Allies (July 3, 1815); and then, for the Emperor, Saint Helena; for Auguste, hard and incessant application to science, literature, history of constitutions, and the like. Comte revelled in the severest studies. But young blood reacted against this self-imposed despotism. The student sometimes

wandered into the Wood Galleries of the Palais Royal, when night darkened the heart of Paris, and he mingled in the idling throng, among whom flitted dubious women. .....Comte's own lips tell the tale. We shall find, as we follow his life story, that he was moved by an extraordinary sincerity in self-revelation.

Meanwhile, we should chronicle that on April 3 of this year a soldier's wife gave birth in Paris to a girl, Clothilde. The wife belonged to an aristocratic Lorraine family, connected (so ran the proud boast) with that Wild Boar Lamarck, whom Scott pictures in *Quentin Durward*, and with the famous and gentle Charles Borromeo, Archbishop of Milan. The soldier was Captain Marie. He had fought in Spain, and had had fingers frozen in the retreat from Russia, and taken part in the campaign of 1814. In fateful days to come, in 1844, we shall meet Clothilde again.

At the Polytechnic, Auguste's companions called him the Thinker. Another youth, whom, clad in a wonderful blue coat and white waistcoat, we shall catch a glimpse of farther on, they named the Orator. But the Thinker, the Orator, and the rest (including our friend Valat, now a pupil) were soon to disappear from the Polytechnic stage. A tutor, who seems to have been otherwise an estimable person, offended the pupils by squatting in an armchair and putting his feet up on a table while addressing his questions. Comte's turn came. He replied alertly to the questions, but assumed a singularly careless posture.

"My son," said the annoyed Professor, "your attitude is unbecoming."

"Sir," answered Auguste, "I thought I did right to follow your example."

Hasty close of the examination! Auguste drew up a note, signed it, and obtained a long row of signatures:—

"Sir, painful as it is to us to adopt such a measure towards an old Polytechnic boy, we nevertheless must ask you not to enter this school again." The governing board consulted. Authority must be vindicated. The school was dismissed. There was no hope that Comte, the ringleader, could be reinstated. The brilliant Thinker, in marked disgrace, went down to Montpellier. For some months he consoled himself among his friends, and attended lectures at the School of Medicine.

II

CAROLINE

COMTE, aged eighteen, returned to Paris in September, 1816, his mother weeping at his departure. For a few years he received moderate sums from his father, but he chiefly supported himself by giving private lessons in mathematics, all hope of re-entry into the Polytechnic having vanished. A French General, hearing of Auguste's merits, proposed emigration to the United States. Congress had appointed the General as chief government engineer, and planned a Polytechnic at Washington. In this school Comte might occupy the chair of Descriptive Geometry, Pure and Applied. Thrilled by this American vision, he studied English, studied the United States constitution, re-studied Descriptive Geometry, and buoyantly reminded friend Valat, who was as poor as himself, of the career of the illustrious Benjamin Franklin. Franklin worked as a humble compositor in his youth, and breakfasted on dry bread; and he lived to possess ample means, to aid in giving freedom to his country, and to earn the blessings of mankind. Courage, Valat!

Meanwhile he read enormously whatever tended to the scientific, the philosophic, the general view of life and history—Montesquieu's *Spirit of Laws*, for example, or Condorcet.[1] For Condorcet, the eulogist of Voltaire and Turgot, and the author of the *Progress of the Human Mind*, Comte always retained the greatest admiration;

[1] Marquis de Condorcet, b. 1743, d. 1794.

and in 1853 we find him declaring: "Ever since the outset of my career I have never ceased to regard the great Condorcet as my spiritual father." Yet he did not accept all his teacher's conclusions. He was enchanted with Condorcet's sketch of early man, the discovery of the alphabet, Greek philosophy and art, Roman administration and law, the rise of Christianity, the Arab culture, the advent of the compass and printing-press, the Renascence and the new liberty of thought, and the vision of the Future. But when Condorcet condemned the Middle Ages as obscurantist and priest-ridden, and yet praised the modern spirit, he seemed to be praising an effect without a cause; for how could the light of Reason emerge from mediæval Darkness? It is important to note this divergence of Comte from Condorcet. Other authors to whom the young student felt much indebted were David Hume, and Robertson, of Edinburgh.[1] In Robertson's pages he felt the evolutionary throb and the sense of historical law.

These meditations on the past did not lessen his eager interest in the present. He wrote to Valat in February, 1817, and pictured the melancholy state of their old school; the Polytechnic students being compelled to join, morning and evening, in prayer to a plaster Christ, to attend mass twice a week, to march in drill-order on Thursdays and Sundays, by way of exercise, through the streets, led by solemn ushers! The great Napoleonic war had closed, and left squalor in its track:—

> Poverty is enormous in Paris; bread very dear, and like to fail. One cannot take a step without witnessing a heart-breaking scene of beggary. Constantly one sees workers breadless and workless. And yet luxury abounding! How disgusting, when so many folk are in absolute want.....

[1] B. 1721, d. 1793; author of *History of Charles V*, etc.

> Dancing is more in vogue than ever. For myself it is not possible for a gavotte or minuet to obliterate the thought of more than thirty thousand humans who suffer hunger.

It was the most natural thing in the world that Comte should come into close relation with so eager and fertile a social reformer as Claude Henri de Rouvroy, Comte de Saint-Simon.[1] He was warned by cautious friends to keep out of Saint-Simon's way, for the reformer was an egoist, and generous only to people who followed reverently in his train. Most reformers are either egoists, or give the impression of being so, and we shall not discover an exception in Auguste. He broke away from Saint-Simon after six or seven years, affirming (what was true) that their physiological organizations differed! So did their intellectual habits. One might roughly compare them by saying that the younger pioneer had a mathematical mind, and the elder an evangelical: that one was Rationalist, the other Christian Pantheist: that one sought to change institutions rapidly, the other laboured tirelessly in the construction of a fundamental doctrine. As a matter of fact, Comte finally arrived, by slow stages, at an almost evangelic position himself.

Saint-Simon had enlisted in Washington's army, and had been decorated for bravery. Though republican, he was not Terrorist, and he suffered imprisonment in Robespierre's reign. Reflecting on the social anarchy, he mapped a scheme of re-organization,—"All by industry, all for industry"; masses of workers directed by an aristocracy of science and art: an alliance of the French and English Parliaments: an International

[1] B. at Paris, 1760, d. 1825; author of *Industrial Catechism*, *New Christianity*, etc.

Parliament (League of Nations, as we say in 1920). "A time will undoubtedly come," he said, "when all the nations of Europe will feel that questions of general interest should predominate over those that are merely national." A spirit of ethical Christianism, clear of dogmas and legends, would protect the weak and diffuse fraternity. Add certain engineering visions, such as connecting the Danube with the Rhine and cutting a canal at Panama. Among men who discussed such projects at meals, at midnight, in assembly-halls, Auguste was philosophically happy. At first he was paid for his literary assistance. When the prophet's funds dropped low, Comte cheerfully continued for nothing. In an article which the Saint-Simonian press issued he framed an aphorism which was to stand as a pillar of his thought: "Everything is relative; that is the only absolute principle." In other words, man cannot reach unalterable and universal truth; he must relate all things to his own feeling, thought, and experience; his apprehension and his expression must vary with time and circumstance. And at the same period he advocated the liberty of the Press, a cardinal maxim to which he remained loyal all his life. Comte was setting his hand joyfully to the plough. He bore, indeed, the name of a Spanish Saint, Isidore of Seville, who, in his seventh-century time, was renowned for his devotion and his encyclopædic learning. But henceforth he would abandon that signature and call himself simply Auguste.

The charming Polytechnic dream faded. The United States Congress postponed the scheme; and, like a good Frenchman, Comte assured friend Valat he was glad to escape expatriation.

While writing to Valat (April, 1818) Comte very frankly revealed things of a far more intimate quality than the liberty of the Press or polytechnics. We snatch

fragments from this old letter, now yellow with a century's wear :—

> For nearly eight months I have been acquainted with happiness.....you ask what can be the object of this sweet sentiment? A young lady, twenty-nine years of age, Italian by origin, who has lived in Paris, as most of her family have, for fifteen years past, and with whom I chanced to become friends. Imagine with what delight I, who had till then never felt such emotions towards a woman .....my Pauline is married, she has a daughter of seven or eight years.....

Valat, now a professor at a college at Béziers, heard other episodes of the story in this and ensuing letters, the chief scene being the birth of the child Louise. A long time after, when Comte was at the threshold of the tragedy of his life, he breathed the secret to other ears thus :—

> When I was twenty years old I had, or at least I thought I had, by a woman who might have been my mother, a daughter, for whose loss I still weep sometimes, though she was only in her ninth year when an attack of croup took her from me.
>
> However doubtful it might be whether I was the father, I had morally accepted, and I honourably fulfilled to the very end, all the different duties of this relationship.

For Louise he wept in 1827. Of Pauline no sign appears after the spring of 1820. The threads of stately philosophy cross the threads of passion and grief. This crossing will recur twice in Auguste Comte's career.

In the winter of 1818–19 he was brooding over the question of mercenary armies, of which he formed a very poor opinion. He preferred, in one shape or another, a National Guard, or popular force, such as, in Germany and Spain, had successfully opposed the power of

Bonaparte. The time was also come, he thought, for realizing a durable international peace, such as had been dreamed by Henry IV and Sully and by the Abbé de Saint-Pierre.[1] But it must be effected by a union of peoples, and not, as the Abbé had supposed, by a mere league of kings. So far good. Our young philosopher, however, had already concluded, as Saint-Simon had, that while the instincts ("desires," Comte named them) of the people after liberty, peace, and industrial prosperity were vivid and sound, an intellectual class was needed to formulate these demands in modes warranted by sound history and experience, and a third, executive class must translate these desires and formulations into civic practice. Such is the theme of a paper by Comte, printed in the Saint-Simonian *Censeur*, July, 1819. A Socialist of 1919 would hardly have spoken more vehemently than Comte wrote to Valat in 1819:—

> My friend, this class of laborious men, frank and worthy, whom we both love, is oppressed and ignobly exploited by its superiors. The fruit of its toil should belong to it entirely.
>
> It should cease to nourish the infamous luxury and base idleness of its masters. Social order, now organized for the benefit of the useless people, should be organized solely for the useful. Here, friend, lies our duty—you and I, who spring from the oppressed class, and who can help a little, according to our lights and our abilities, must aid in realizing this great change.

He added that the earliest Christians preached equality and fraternity, and got hanged by the priests and governors. It was no wonder that Jesus Christ was called, by the French Revolutionists, the premier No-breeches (*sans-culotte*) of the world. With all this, we

[1] Author of *Plan of Perpetual Peace*; d. 1743.

may assume, Valat readily agreed. From this attitude on the poverty problem Comte never essentially departed, though in middle life he employed language less drastic.

Comte's thought was launched on a course of historical research which was to form a vital factor in his philosophy. His reflections through the winter of 1819-20 came to an issue in an essay in the *Organisateur* (Saint-Simonian publication), April, 1820. The Middle Ages, he said, had seen the separation of the Spiritual (Catholic) Power from the Temporal (Feudal) Power. These powers were still evolving, one towards a scientific social theory which would guide civilization without the aid of theology, and the other towards an industrial organization which would ensure peace to the world and satisfy the just claims of Labour. Saint-Simon was now fully aware of the talent, and even genius, of his recruit. He still considered himself the chief of the enterprise, and quite naturally so. Ideas of Comte's, and at times his very language, were freely incorporated into Saint-Simon's articles. But while the enthusiastic head of the school of prophets counted such a procedure a normal use of a young comrade's industry, Comte became more and more restive. He did not sign his writings for fear of causing pain to his very orthodox friends at Montpellier. They had, however, learned of his association with so radical a spirit as Saint-Simon, and their letters expressed their misgivings.

There were other troubles. Adolphe, Comte's younger brother, was somewhat unstable. Auguste's recourse to the purse of Comte senior was not a negligible tax, and the father had sold the horse which had served him for exercise. Nor did Auguste write often enough, and his mother was often in tears at his long silences—due, as we surmise, to his intellectual absorptions. She sent

boxes of sweetmeats, with injunctions to post them back for re-filling. To sister Alix, Auguste dispatched magazines of guitar music.

May 3, 1821, happened to be a public holiday, some infant royalty having been baptized.

Dusk shadowed the Palais Royal and the Wood Galleries, where we have seen dubious women flitting. Here Comte, strolling, met Caroline Massin. To his dying day the unhappy encounter left an ineffaceable mark on his career and his inner soul.

Caroline Massin, now aged nearly nineteen, was the daughter of a provincial actor and actress (and seamstress), unmarried, and separated soon after her birth. She had been cared for as a child by the maternal grandmother, an honest woman and wife to a tailor. The tailor died; the widow could no longer maintain the girl, who returned to her mother. The downward grade began with a young lawyer; it continued lamentably: and the girl—naturally intelligent, appreciative of men of a superior mental type, superficially amiable, and by all accounts pretty—was inscribed on the shameful register of the Paris police.

Nominally she was a needle-woman. The father will only seldom figure on our stage. Once or twice, during the summer of 1821, when meeting Comte, Caroline half-jestingly hinted at marriage. From November onwards for a year he lost sight of her. We feel, all through the sad story, that Auguste, who pursued science and philosophy with extraordinary ardour and passion, had so concentrated his thought upon this quest that he had but casual attention and a mere mechanism of instinct left for the sex-relation. Thus tragically linked, these two natures within one form—the masterly philosophical genius and the almost absent-minded child in sex—traversed the strange years until, in middle life,

Comte awoke to a vision of true womanhood, and then .....alas !.....

Adolphe died in Martinique, 1821. Auguste always remembered him with tenderness.

Old Professor Delambre[1] gave a course of lectures on astronomy, a subject in which Comte took unfailing interest. The audiences dwindled. One day Auguste was the only listener. The Professor genially carried off the audience in his carriage, invited him home, and finished the lecture in a fireside chat. The time would come when Comte would himself deliver popular lectures, better attended, on astronomy. A contemplation of the starry heaven, he taught, rendered man conscious of inexorable law in external nature, and should send him, with deeper devotion, back to the duties of daily life.

Another study of this period was zoology, pursued under the inspiration of Blainville,[2] with whom Comte formed a very sincere friendship. Indeed, we may note here that Auguste followed up very keenly the main scientific lines of his day—mathematics, astronomy, physics, chemistry, biology.

Pacing alone the streets of Paris, and brooding through the nights till early morning hours in the solitude of his apartment, he wrought out ideas which were published in an essay, May, 1822.

Ancient systems of belief were falling into anarchy, the material life demanded a new direction, and "long and terrible convulsions" menaced European society unless reorganization on a surer basis was undertaken. Scientific thinkers, acting as spiritual chiefs, must transform politics into an exact science; and industrial chiefs, on the temporal side, must realize political theory in moral and social practice. As he examined the history

[1] B. 1749, d. 1822; one of the pioneers of the metric system.
[2] B. 1777, d. 1850; successor to Cuvier at the Collège de France.

of civilization, Comte observed the human mind operating along three stages—its thought, in the period of ancient slavery and militarism, was theological; it saw everywhere the work of spirits and Gods. In the second stage, it placed less value on war, and more on industry; it partly emancipated the labourer; it discussed and criticized its beliefs; it expressed itself in abstractions and metaphysic. In the third stage, it must adopt the scientific method of observation, reason, and prediction founded on past experiences; it must introduce a new social system of "Positive Politics." This latter phrase was to provide a title, in 1851–54, for his great four-volume treatise on sociology. Saint-Simon did not hurry the issue of an essay which soared above his customary and less rigid methods of thought. He allowed a hundred "proofs" to go out to various friends and critics.

A Jewish disciple of Saint-Simon, Olinde Rodrigues, had recommended to Gustave d'Eichthal the name of Comte as an admirable tutor in mathematics. Comte being indisposed, d'Eichthal called on him. Here is his reminiscence:—

> I shall never forget the littered room, and how this near-sighted man rose to reply to me, but so absorbed in his ideas that he seemed not to be aware of the real presence of the inquirer.....Comte gave lessons to my brother. I attended them, and was soon struck by the eminently philosophical character of his teaching. I wished myself to join in the lessons. But soon we left the study of mathematics in order to talk of positive philosophy; and at the end of a few months I became his disciple.

Not, however, an enduring one!

As time elapsed, it was obvious that Auguste, now well on the way to the foundation of a first-rank social

philosophy, could not remain under the patronage of Saint-Simon. The elder man had a tendency to tamper with the younger man's work, to append cautions, and, in any case, to label him as "my pupil." And pupil he had been. Auguste said so. They held many ideas in common as to history, the value of the Middle Ages, the modern anarchy, the approaching dominion of labour. But whereas Saint-Simon was anxious that the working-classes should forthwith annex the government, Comte wished to reflect, to plan the intellectual basis, to map out the educational doctrine, to ensure that society should be furnished with a system of exact political thought, capable of foreseeing and foreordaining.

Comte, in later years, referred to his connection with Saint-Simon as a "wretched association" (*funeste liaison*). We can let the phrase pass as a literary man's curse. It is not for us to adopt it. Saint-Simon was an honest and inspiring figure, far inferior to Comte, but deserving our gratitude.

Early in 1824 the Saint-Simonians issued a series of papers, entitled *The Worker's Political Catechism*, and Comte's essay, already mentioned, on Positive Politics, was included, Saint-Simon tacking on to it a note saying, in a pleasant sort of way, that he did not entirely endorse Comte's views. The two prophets had lively conversations on their relative rights and positions; and they must needs part. Comte had a hundred copies of his essay for himself, and in the list of persons to whom he gave them we find "My father," "My mother," Valat, Blainville, Poinsot, Arago, Benjamin Constant, Humboldt, Jefferson (of U.S.A.), and Monroe (famous for his Doctrine). A small circle of intellectuals were now recognizing Comte's originality and power.

Saint-Simon died in 1825. For half a century or more his school kept together with certain definite characters,

and even now its traces are evident in twentieth-century Socialism. In varying degrees it affected Abbe Liszt, Heine, Stuart Mill, Rosa Bonheur's father, F. Le Play; and the disciples once had hopes of Napoleon III. For some years the twin leaders were Enfantin,[1] a schoolfellow of Comte's at the Polytechnic, and Bazard.[2] Zealous missionaries stirred the cities of France, and founded six "churches," and aroused Belgium. Their newspaper, the *Globe*, thrilled with democratic appeals, but died heroically in 1832. "Father" Enfantin (so ran his title) classed himself with Moses, Zoroaster, and Mohammed, inclined to pantheism, regarded marriage as servile, wished to communalize property; and, with all his extravagances, had many business-like qualities, was interested in railroads, and mooted the cutting of a canal at Suez. When, at the Saint-Simonian headquarters, he suddenly blazed out in a light blue coat, white pantaloons, and a white waistcoat fastened behind by fraternal fingers (a symbol of social co-operation, he said), and announced that the costume was emblematic of a kind of Messiahship, we need not suppose Enfantin was losing his balance. He clearly enjoyed his prophetic office. He visited Egypt, where F. de Lesseps was vice-consul, and talked energetically about the Canal—and the result was plain to the world in 1869. As a member of a Scientific Commission, he had an influence in the industrial opening up of Algeria, and urged the just treatment of natives. He had split off from Bazard on the question of the relation of the sexes, and his ideas in that field once earned him a year in prison. But he was far from a mere visionary or fanatic. As a railroad director, he considerably helped the development of communications in France. French Socialism, which manifestly grew

[1] B. 1796, d. 1864. [2] B. 1791, d. 1832.

out of the Saint-Simonian movement, has always had a humaner and more generous quality than the German. And we may here venture on the general observation that Saint-Simon, Comte, Lamennais, Cabet, Fourier, Louis Blanc, Proudhon, Mazzini, Robert Owen, and our English Chartists were factors in one vast social drama of the Nineteenth Century, pressing forward, some in one way, some another, the emancipation and progress of Labour. Their vagaries we are bound to treat gently, for our age owes them an enormous debt.

We return to Auguste Comte's intimate record.

Towards the close of 1822 he dropped into a reading-room (there were many such at that period, conducted by private enterprise), and recognized in the young lady in charge his former acquaintance of the Wood Galleries. During the ensuing twelve months they occasionally met, but in a merely conventional manner. One cannot help perceiving that her own brain was chief agent in leading up to an issue. Caroline Massin told Comte that, as person in charge of books, she would be all the more efficient if she better understood the contents of the scientific works—on mathematics, for instance—which she loaned to customers. Perhaps he would give her a few easy lessons in that sphere? Comte agreed, and visited her apartments. Before long they were living together, she straightforwardly asking him to marry her. At that he hesitated. Yet he felt the need of companionship. Caroline appeared to possess agreeableness and gaiety. He was conscious that he had little of the art of pleasing women..... And one is forced to confess he was right. This unfortunate girl might be redeemed from a dismal fate.

So meditating, he accompanied her one Sunday to a restaurant. While they were seated, a man halted at the entrance and beckoned. Caroline rose, pale and

agitated, and went towards him. She begged Comte, who had jumped up impetuously, to keep quiet. After a whispered conversation she returned and explained. The man was a detective. Her name was on a certain register. It was her duty to report herself fortnightly, and she had omitted to do so recently. The penalty was imprisonment at St. Lazare. She had pleaded with him for respite. In the end he took her address, and she promised to go to the police station next day.

Next day she went. The superintendent listened to her, and finally advised that, if she could get married, the entry in the register would be cancelled. All this she reported to Auguste.

We already know him well enough to conclude what he would do. We may be sure, too, that the sentiment of his Saint-Simonian circle would approve of his resolve to restore an unhappy sister. In April, 1824, he had written to a friend, Tabarié :—

> You will remember that last autumn I told you of an agreeable lady to whom I gave algebra lessons. .....She had some furniture, and I a little money ; and we are now installed, in the Rue de l'Oratoire, No. 6, near the Rue Saint-Honoré. This new kind of life suits me well ; I am happier than I have been. I am a trifle harassed by my Caroline, who wants to realize what is now a pretence at matrimony ; but I hope she will let the idea alone.....

But he could not see her in distress. He wrote at once to Montpellier to procure the consent, legally necessary, of his parents. After demur, apparently due to their doubts as to Auguste's resources, they yielded. Comte even contemplated (so he wrote to Valat) getting a post in London. He was marrying a wife who had no dowry. On the other hand, he could tell Valat of her kind heart, her grace, her novel wit, her cheerful character.....

Thus easily he passed on to February 19, 1825, when, at the hour of noon, at the Town Hall, 4th Arrondissement, Paris, he and Caroline Massin contracted civil marriage before the local mayor. Among the company were Caroline's mother, Professor Duhamel,[1] Dr. Olinde Rodrigues (the Saint-Simonian), and a young lawyer, of whom we have caught an invidious glimpse before.

M. and Madame Comte spent two weeks in the summer at Montpellier. Caroline was reluctant to go. We can divine that she dreaded the prospect of meeting an eminently orthodox and bourgeois family. Auguste was, as usual, short of money, and loth to spend for this southern expedition; but other motives were at play. He unbosomed all to friend Valat. Paris was no longer a necessity. In eleven years he had formed no intimate friendships in the city. His brain was now a seed-bed of ideas which would take a century to mature! A cavern in the Alps would suffice for workshop. He had led a life over-intellectual. Might he not now hope for some consolations of the heart, a homely environment, converse with friends remembered from childhood? He would have been glad to settle at Montpellier.

But—

The journey to his native place was fatal. Caroline disliked Montpellier. The parents had not too warmly received Caroline. Auguste's dream of family life in the province could not be fulfilled. He must devote himself to his intellectual aims, and relinquish hopes that had been sweet, though fleeting. Then he added (to Valat), in the curiously stiff diction in which he expressed himself all his life:—

Such is the decision I have taken, and which

[1] Mathematician; d. 1872.

I shall seek to pursue, so far as is permitted by the diverse tendencies of my organization.

The young couple took rooms—one apartment was large enough for a small lecture audience, if occasion arose—at 13 Rue du Faubourg-Montmartre, Paris.

No child was born of this marriage.

It will not be long before the failure and the misery are painfully disclosed. The tale shall be told, but, so far as this present pen is concerned, without the parade of moralizing judgment which is all-too-much affected in such cases on behalf of one side or the other. This woman and this man have long ago finished their errors and their atonements. Let a compassionate generation shed tears of pity at their graves.

III

THE INTERRUPTED LECTURES

THE income of the Comte couple was perilously small. When, in the winter of 1825–26, Auguste sat pondering and writing at his desk, and even gained a few fees for articles in the Saint-Simonian periodical, *The Producer* (founded by Rodrigues), Caroline had visions of a more comfortable existence. Looking back to this period many years afterwards, Comte said: "Madame Comte always hoped to transform me into an academic machine, earning for her money, titles, and posts."

The *Producer* articles (November, 1825) formed an essay in which he again traced the progress of the human understanding from theology to metaphysic and to the Positive, or scientific, stage. He argued that the belief in Gods, or divine wills, was natural enough in the early ages. The scientific mind should set aside theology without accusing our theological forefathers of folly. "The human mind has not continued down to our time in a state of madness." While the modern tendency was scientific, we yet often observe theological, metaphysical, and Positive ideas jostling in the social mind to-day. Astronomy was the first science to become Positive (that is, to get clear of conceptions of Gods ordering planets, stars, etc.), then physics, then chemistry, then physiology; and then the study of man and his institutions should constitute a Positive science of "Social Physics,"[1] the spread of which would aid in

[1] Comte afterwards devised the term "Sociology."

removing the moral and political anarchy of the nineteenth century. The teachers of our race were first theocrats (who regarded the laws of God and the laws of society as the same); in Greece the philosophers thought out their theories as distinct from theology; in the Middle Ages the Church power was quite separate from the secular power; metaphysical speculations and scientific research, in turn, began to carry Europe past the Church; and a fresh spiritual power should arise, composed of scientific thinkers, supported by popular education. In this latter sphere good results were arising from schools established in France by Charles Dupin,[1] and in England by Dr. Birkbeck.[2] This essay was honoured by a favourable commentary by the Abbé Lamennais in his paper, *The Catholic Memorial.* Comte had certain friendly relations with this celebrated Abbé, who began life as a strict Catholic, passed on to liberal theology and a vague Socialism, startled the world with his dramatic parables in *Words of a Believer* (1834), and became, in effect, a Rationalist.[3]

Early in 1826 Comte published more developed reflections on the need for a Spiritual Power which should direct education on a scientific foundation, introduce moral order into conditions of labour, and aim at combining all the European, and, indeed, the greatest possible number of nations, into one moral communion. And a union practical as well as moral:—

> The collective action of European society.....is demanded, either by operations of common utility, which call for the co-operation of two or more nations, or by the general influence, partly of a repressive character, which the most civilized nations ought to exert over those less civilized, in

[1] B. 1784, d. 1873. [2] B. 1786, d. 1841.
[3] Lamennais was born 1782; died 1854.

> the common interest of all. These various motives may possibly prove sufficiently powerful to decide the formation of a certain sort of temporal sovereignty embracing several of the most advanced populations.

It will be remarked that Comte laid great stress on the cultivation of the sciences as the basis of education and a new politics. He was now planning to invite a select audience of kindred spirits to his modest apartments, where he intended to deliver lectures, from April 1, 1826, to April 1, 1827, on Mathematics, Astronomy, Physics, Chemistry, Physiology, and Social Physics, and so comprising a system of Positive Philosophy. He circulated the programme in manuscript.

While he projected a world polity, the means for carrying on his humble household ran short. Caroline, in desperation, broadly hinted that a certain young lawyer had money, and his visits, if permitted, might solve the difficulties of the household purse. Auguste exploded in such violent wrath that she left the house and took a lodging elsewhere, the address of which she seems to have intimated to him. Alone in his rooms in the Rue du Faubourg-Montmartre, Auguste brooded over her proposal and her flight, and painfully attempted to elaborate the lectures.

On Sunday, April 2, a little, but distinguished, group assembled. Among them were Alexander von Humboldt, Blainville, Poinsot, Broussais, and Joseph Fourier. For an hour or two he forgot the tragedy of Caroline as he sketched his great thoughts:—

> In studying the entire development of the human intelligence in its various spheres of activity, from its most simple first emergence to our own times, I believe I have discovered a great fundamental law, to which this intelligence is subjected by an unchanging necessity, and which seems to me to be solidly established, both by rational proofs furnished

> by the knowledge of our nature and by the historical tests yielded by a careful examination of the Past. The law is this: each of our chief conceptions, each branch of our knowledge, passes successively through three different theoretical states—the Theological, or Fictitious; the Metaphysic, or Abstract; the Scientific, or Positive.[1]

On Wednesday, April 5, the second lecture was given. That the audience was rather less was due to the disappearance of the curiosity-mongers. The third lecture took place on Sunday, April 9. When, on Wednesday, April 12, the faithful few arrived, they found the door closed and the blinds down, and could ascertain nothing except that the young lecturer was ill.

The following Saturday evening Blainville received a strange and rambling note, in which Comte said he would be found at Montmorency—a suburban spot where Parisians enjoyed the forest and the open air. Blainville also heard from the Abbé Lamennais, who had had an incoherent message from Comte; and we know now that Comte had previously visited the Abbé and, agitated and distressed, confided to him the story of the unhappy marriage. Caroline herself received a vague note. Suspecting he had wandered to his favourite Montmorency, she hastened there, and found him there—obviously insane—on the Monday. Two gendarmes watched him in a building in a hotel garden, while Caroline hurried to Paris and begged the aid of Blainville, who was a medical man. On Tuesday, April 18, Blainville, who showed a kindly and helpful spirit all through the episode, persuaded Comte to enter a coach. The party were five—Auguste, Caroline, Blainville, an attendant from Dr. Esquirol's private

[1] This passage is cited from the first Lecture in vol. i of the *Course of Positive Philosophy*, 1830.

asylum, and a police officer. Blainville advised that Comte should be cared for at home, but Caroline objected; and before night the patient was admitted into the Esquirol asylum near Paris.

Caroline's father, some weeks after the scene at Montmorency, dropped the news abruptly into the Montpellier circle, Caroline having merely hinted at an ordinary sickness. Auguste's mother, now in her sixty-third year, took the first coach for Paris. Friend Tabarié—good soul—had meanwhile remitted 500 francs to Caroline to go towards the asylum expenses. Comte senior's purse was heavily drawn upon. The months dragged gloomily on. Comte's wife and mother had never taken to each other, and the old Catholic lady had in some way discovered the nature of Caroline's career before marriage. All the more eager was she that the sad past might, in a measure, be veiled by a Catholic marriage, which should take place before she returned to Montpellier. Abbé Lamennais approved. The consent of the Archbishop of Paris was obtained through Lamennais. Auguste, though by no means restored to sanity, must be brought home—that is, to an apartment in the Rue du Faubourg-Saint-Denis. This was the mother's plan; not Caroline's. And here, on December 2, 1826, in the presence of Rosalie Boyer and there or four obscure persons, a Catholic ceremony consecrated a marriage which was already sufficiently singular. The priest stupidly launched into an exhortation, which was so long that Auguste was bored into deeper unreason; and when signatures were entered in the parish register he wrote himself down as "Auguste Comte, Brutus Bonaparte"![1] Old Madame Comte wept,

[1] The two mocking names were erased; but the marks of erasure were said to be visible many years later. It may be noted that Comte detested both Cæsar's assassin and the man from Corsica.

and departed to Montpellier—a venerable figure whom we must needs salute with infinite respect. Her son was left with Caroline and an attendant from Dr. Esquirol's asylum. The latter was before long dispensed with.

One April day (1827) Caroline went out on a household errand. She returned to find her husband vanished.

Comte—ever brooding, desolate, and still unbalanced—had hurried to the Bridge of Arts and leaped into the Seine. A soldier of the Municipal Guard was passing. He plunged into the stream and rescued the unfortunate Comte. One surmises that the shock was not without its good effect. The patient began to improve. In the middle of June he left Paris, travelling alone, on a visit to his parents. On the road his cash seems to have run short. At Nîmes he borrowed 160 francs from a good-natured lady, who was duly repaid a few days afterwards by Comte senior. Auguste lingered amid the charming old Provençal scenes, and at length, much to the relief of the expecting family, sauntered into the home of his childhood. From this period—June, July, August, 1827—we may date his complete and enduring recovery.

It was in this summer that little Louise died.

Bidding farewell to his Montpellier friends, and to the mother whom he never saw again, Auguste rejoined Caroline at a fresh lodging—this time in the Latin quarter, on the south side of the Seine—at 159 Rue Saint-Jacques. The place was convenient for pupils. Income, however, did not cover expenditure; and one must recognize Caroline's difficulties and anxieties. Comte senior sent fairly frequent subsidies, but a wide margin remained, and Auguste applied to a wealthy manufacturer of cashmere cloth, M. Ternaux,[1] and the

[1] D. 1853.

amiable Patrician (as Comte would philosophically class him) lent the struggling tutor double what he asked. This money having melted away, Comte asked again, and Ternaux wisely declined. The lesson was taken to heart. Comte pulled himself together, sought pupils with more energy, and life became smoother.

The debts we have noted were in no way due to Comte's personal extravagances. The black frock-suits which he habitually wore were not, one would gather, renewed too often. His meals were always simple. A ticket for the opera was his chief luxury. He had now abandoned coffee. A painful dispute, in 1838, with his wife would lead up to abstinence from tobacco. In 1845 he would review the process in his solemnly formal manner:—

> One of my little philosophic secrets which I want to impart to you [Clothilde de Vaux] consists in this general precept—more valuable than it may at first blush appear: to consolidate and facilitate every intellectual or emotional improvement one should combine it with a physical improvement, particularly in the form of a better personal habit. .....And thus I can tell you how the three essential crises of my double personal evolution, dating 1826, 1838, and 1845, are intimately hallowed for me by a lasting material symptom—namely, I was led to the definite abandonment of coffee in 1826, of tobacco in 1838, and to-day of wine.

At this rate we may expect, and we shall indeed discover, that in his last years Comte's simplicity of living was such as might have won the approval of a mediæval Franciscan.

IV

THE POSITIVE PHILOSOPHY

In the spring of 1828 Comte contributed articles on economics to the *New Paris Journal*. The old official control of industry had gone, the modern industrial and commercial freedom had many advantages, which, however, were countered by grave social disorders :—

> Economists ought particularly to study methods for meeting unemployment caused by the introduction of machinery.....The question deserves the utmost attention of governments. So long as it remains unsolved, the popular feeling against machines retains much force, in spite of all arguments to the contrary. A continuous system of public works, planned on a large scale, would be one of the most effective of direct palliatives, and it would offer workmen threatened with unemployment an assured occupation.

He went on to advocate training-schools at which young artisans might learn a variety of crafts, so that, failing to find work in one, they could turn to another. It would be well to establish a Ministry of Commerce and Manufactures to (among other aims) keep the industrial public clearly informed of new enterprises and inventions. The old "go-as-you-please" style (*Laissez faire, laissez passer*) was out of date. Workers should become co-partners :—

> The position of the workers will always be precarious, wretched, and even menacing to society so long as they are not given, in addition to their

daily pay, a certain direct interest in the profits of the industrial enterprises in which they co-operate.

While Comte attracted some notice in France by these views, John Stuart Mill[1] was attentively examining a copy of the young philosopher's pamphlet on *System of Positive Politics* (1824). This reading had happy consequences for Comte, who, meanwhile, was battling with money troubles and seeking professional appointments that would afford a firmer basis than irregular lessons on mathematics.

On Sunday, January 4, 1829, he picked up the broken thread of his lectures, and, at his room in Rue Saint-Jacques, joyously renewed his exposition of the Law of the Three States to an audience that included Alexander von Humboldt,[2] Blainville, Poinsot, Broussais, Esquirol (apparently the lunacy expert), Binet, and Fourier.[3] The course of seventy-two lectures continued regularly, on Sundays and Wednesdays, till the autumn, by which date Comte had valiantly ploughed through his enormous field of mathematics, astronomy, physics, chemistry, physiology, and social physics. Considering the time, place, and circumstances, it was one of the most remarkable exploits in the history of philosophy. He was haunted all the time by want of money for common necessaries. Indigestion—a life-long ailment—disturbed his studies and broke his rest. In begging his father for a loan of 400 francs, he said the doctors had counselled an excursion to the country, but, the expense forbidding, he had substituted long walks beyond the Paris ramparts. His good mother heard rumours of his strange adventure

[1] B. 1806, d. 1873.

[2] B. 1769, d. 1859. Traveller in South America; lecturer in Berlin, 1827–28; author of the famous *Cosmos*.

[3] Joseph Fourier; b. 1768, d. 1830; member of the French Academy; celebrated mathematician.

into the realm of science, and dreaded (she wrote) lest he should "attack our holy religion"; nevertheless, she has confidence that Auguste will shrink from such an outrage. From another quarter came the sound of theological alarm. Gustave d' Eichthal reproached Comte with down-grading into atheism, and he severed his friendly relations and companied for some years with the Saint-Simonians. And scarcely had Comte delivered his last lecture of the seventy-two when Caroline—perpetually harassed by lowness of household funds—openly proposed (again !) to her husband that she should receive the visits of "a wealthy lover" (*un riche galant*). His reply was emphatic. He was, perhaps, becoming less sensitive to Caroline's eccentricities. They continued to live together, yet with increasing friction.

In December, 1829, the lectures of the *Course of Positive Philosophy* were re-delivered at the Royal Athenæum of Paris, closing in 1830. A great deal of his leisure was devoted during the ensuing twelve years to the publication of the lectures (sixty in print) in six volumes. Some of the main features of this work, which still influences modern thought, we may very briefly indicate.

By the word "philosophy" (he says in vol. i) he means the general system of human conceptions, and the word "positive" implies the object of co-ordinating observed facts. Of course, this manner of thinking (as distinct from the study of Gods or of supposed self-existent abstractions) is very old ; it dates from early human ages, from Aristotle, and from the Arabs of the Middle Ages. However, it is convenient to take a later starting-point, represented by the names and ideas of Bacon in England, Descartes in France, Galileo in Italy. Comte states his double aim ; and here he is, in effect, stating the double aim of his life, though he naturally

expressed himself in a variety of terms with the lapse of years. One aim is to gather all the materials of the sciences into a harmonious whole, training the mind to form a general view of life and nature, instead of being tied down mentally to details and sections. The other aim is to lead up from mathematics and physical science to the science of social physics (which he afterwards calls "Sociology"). Mathematical science is the oldest and most perfect of all. It is the foundation of all other sciences. In studying its three parts—calculation, geometry, and mechanics (number, measure, movement) —the mind learns, by dealing with numbers, measures, and movements directly observable, to reason further on numbers, measures, and movements not directly observable. This kind of reasoning can be applied universally. There is no corner of our thought-world which is not, in some way or other, subject to the laws of number, measure, and mechanics.

Having thus considered mathematics as the logic, or fundamental reasoning method, Comte passes to astronomy (vol. ii). This science, upon which our measure of time and our laws of navigation depend, has now (1835) purged itself from any relation with the God doctrine. The psalmist of old sang "The heavens declare the glory of God." To-day we see in the heavens no other glory than that of Hipparchus, Kepler, Newton, and of all others who have co-operated in ascertaining the laws of the solar system and the stars. The knowledge of such laws dissipates absurd prejudices and superstitious terrors. Right from its origin astronomy enabled man, more or less accurately, to predict events such as the time for the rising of a star. And this power of prediction is just that which distinguishes real science from mere knowledge of facts that have occurred; that is, mere erudition. But Comte never

ridicules the imperfection of past phases of science. People's command of facts being what they were in bygone times, and their view of nature being very limited, it was, for them, quite rational to believe in the movement of a small sun and small stars round the much larger mass of the earth.[1] In the same volume he deals with Physics, under the heads of gravity, heat, sound, light, and electricity. This science furnishes an admirable field for experimentation, and administers shrewd blows at theology. For example, the uneducated masses easily conceived of the lightning as a factor peculiarly controlled by the Gods. But when Franklin invented the lightning conductor even the common man could perceive that, within certain limits, human ingenuity could do what once only the Divine Will was thought capable of doing.

Chemistry, in 1838, was a long way behind its present elaboration, and Comte (in vol. iii) had not much scope for his special qualities. He condemned the metaphysical indolence which evaded explanations by asserting that substances were influenced by "predisposing affinities"; he observed that, in the general system of man's action upon nature, chemistry would furnish the principal source of power; and he noted that the conception of the indestructibility of matter excluded the idea of creation or annihilation by God. The second part of the volume was devoted to Biology, of course on a pre-Darwin basis.[2] It contained interesting discussions of the views of Bichat, who showed the association of life and tissues; of Blainville, whose definition of life as a double internal movement, going on continuously

[1] Spectrum analysis not having yet led to the discovery of the chemical constitution of heavenly bodies, Comte stated that "we cannot determine" it.

[2] Darwin's *Origin of Species* appeared in 1859.

throughout an organism, of composition and decomposition he commended; of Lamarck, who partly anticipated Darwin; of Gall, who so ably opened the modern study (still very imperfect) of the functions of the brain; and so on. The latter subject naturally led up to the next theme—namely, Social Physics, which took up volumes iv, v, and vi (1839, 1841, 1842). In place of the term "Social Physics" he presently invented that of "Sociology"; and from vol. iv onwards Comte made such frequent use of the phrases "evolution," "social evolution," "human evolution," etc., that it is clear he gave vogue to these ideas on the largest scale before the period of Darwin and Spencer. He speaks very significantly of the "Ascending Evolution of Humanity." From Blaise Pascal's seventeenth-century meditations he selected an all-but-forgotten passage as a sort of evolutionary motto:—

> The whole succession of men, during the long series of ages, should be considered as One Man, who continues to live and who continually learns.

Following Pascal's thought, he described the new science of Sociology as:—

> Representing, in a direct and continuous manner, the mass of the human race, present, past, and even future; as constituting, in all aspects, and more and more, whether in space or time, an immense and eternal social unity, whose various organs, individual or national, always united by an intimate and universal solidarity, inevitably concur, each in its special mode and degree, in the fundamental evolution of humanity—a conception, both prime in value and entirely modern, which must finally form the rational basis of Positive morality.

Christianism, in proclaiming the law of Jesus superior to the law of Moses, sketched the idea of progress, but theological philosophy then halted; and not till the age

of the French Revolution did the conception of progress become a definite factor in the world-consciousness. It is to be noted that, in the midst of all these studies of moral and intellectual evolution, Comte was ever mindful of the material basis of human life—that is to say, the supply of physical needs by man's action upon the world about him. But civilization implies the gradual lessening of the empire of the Physical and the increase of the Social and Intellectual.

The fifth volume outlined, with many original and profound reflections, the course of evolution from the primitive, fetish-worshipping age to the days of Voltaire, Rousseau, and Robespierre. Comte gave due appreciation to the art and science of Greece, the political and military genius of Rome, and the social and moral organization of the West by the Catholic Church. The vast dominion of Rome, he pointed out, tended spontaneously to divide into feudal localities, and this dissolution was not primarily due to the barbaric invasions. Europe, thus separating into feudal parts, needed a unifying influence distinct from the temporal or political influence, and this was supplied by (in its best period) Catholicism. The Church failed to meet modern intellectual needs, yet it gave the world a great model of spiritual organization which might yet lead to fruitful developments. In any case it was irrational to class the Middle Age as "dark." Of Protestantism and its glorification of "private judgment" Comte had not a high opinion. It was a metaphysical and negativist phase of thought, and he rather contemptuously observed that Political Economy, with its cold abstractions, was a natural offspring of Protestantism.[1] And we may here

[1] For Adam Smith's work, however, Comte expressed deep admiration.

note that, while Comte rejected the metaphysic which sought to explain the Cosmos by vague abstractions, he also applied terms of disdain to political metaphysic, legal metaphysic, and even the metaphysic of philanthropy. The latter phrase referred to the poor-law institutions which, based on a false theory of human nature, met the prayer of poverty for bread by providing cells!

A broad survey of the forces that made for Positivism —industry, art, science, the liberating and constructive spirit of the Revolution (especially of the Convention, 1792) —occupied the sixth and last volume. In this survey Comte mainly contemplated the "advanced-guard of our race"—namely, the five nations (Italy, France, England, Germany, Spain) which, in essence, formed a great republic, or "European synergy." As God and war had been associated, so the Positive Philosophy would naturally be associated with the industrial life. Of this life, from mediæval serfage, the commercial enterprises of Italy, Holland, and the Hanseatic League to the nineteenth century, Comte described the evolution, with interesting notes on the effects of the compass, gunpowder, and printing-press, and on the social value of explorations by Columbus and other voyagers. Incidentally he condemned negro slavery in scathing language. In discussing art —"the sympathetic ideal representation of the personal, domestic, or social sentiments which characterize human nature"—he praised the mediæval cathedrals, and paid tribute to such artists as the Troubadours, Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, Corneille, Molière, Calderon, Cervantes, Fielding, and the Italian and German composers of dramatic music. The scientific spirit was the Positivist spirit; but Comte did not forget to express appreciation of crude pioneers such as astrologers and alchemists (who did, at any rate, seek their

ends by other means than fasting, prayer, and similar religious[1] expedients !). He also gave honour to Arabian science, and saw certain merits in the Catholic education in the Middle Ages. Industry, art, and science ought to lead up to a new and rational social order; but, unhappily, the conflict of Capital and Labour hindered this development :—

> Modern industrial society is radically devoid of systematic morality.....Among producers and consumers, or among the various industrial classes, and above all between the employers and workers, it seems agreed that, following the primitive instinct of the emancipated slave, everybody should be solely absorbed in his personal interest.....This blind, unorganized extension of machinery is directly opposed, in many cases, to the most legitimate interests of the masses, whose just claims necessarily tend to excite increasingly serious collisions, industrial relations being given over to a crude physical antagonism in consequence of the absence of all rational planning.

At this point Comte again stressed the need for a new, untheological "Spiritual Power" which, initiated by the ideas of Bacon and Descartes, should preside over the political regeneration of humanity. Such an organized expression of philosophy would in no wise trench on the province of temporal authority. It would advise and educate. For education—scientific, and, above all, moral —must furnish the foundation of a new politics. Education must foster the social sentiment and the spirit of service by appeals to the grand universal history of our race, and by commemorating the heroic figures of social progress.

[1] Throughout the six volumes the word "religious" signifies "theological." Comte afterwards used it in a non-theological sense.

> In every rightly ordered community each member can and should be regarded as a veritable public servant, in so far as his individual activity co-operates in the general economy.....Universal education is eminently calculated, without encouraging disorderly ambitions, to place each person in a station suited to his principal qualities, no matter in what class he was born.

Towards the conclusion of his work Comte significantly remarked that his entire treatise illustrated the fact that the true philosophic spirit was nothing more than "a simple methodical extension of common good sense to all the subjects accessible to human reason."

The main lines which Comte's meditations pursued in his latter period, 1842–1857, were marked out in this six-volume treatise, with one exception. His valuation of the feminine influence was slight. But a germ of his future conception was already in being. When praising Catholicism for its genius in creating moral types which, relatively to its mediæval conditions, were real inspirations to the humblest and the most eminent people alike, he added a tribute to the figure of Mary, a sublime type which symbolized to woman a mystical but effective conciliation of purity and motherhood. And, when speaking of the Spiritual Power which provided an intellectual balance to material tendencies, he observed that women have always, by the force of good feeling, assisted this spiritual function—a remark which, however, he did not elaborate.

A singular lawsuit arose out of the publication of the last instalment of the *Positive Philosophy*. We will give the details presently, but will first record Comte's personal experiences from 1830 onwards.

The Revolution of the three July days, 1830, which turned Charles X out of France, along with his Divine Right ideas and his anti-Free Press policy, did not deeply

interest Comte. He was a republican, but the republic he wanted must be based on re-organized science, philosophy, and education. This re-organization could have proceeded as well under the Bourbon Charles as under the Orleanist Louis Philippe and his Liberal bourgeois supporters and their Parliamentary metaphysic! Shortly after Louis Philippe's advent, Comte was notified of his enrolment in the National Guard. He promptly declined, though not on non-resistance principles. "Being republican by sympathy and conviction," he said, "I am not going to swear that, at the peril of my life and that of others, I will defend a government which, if I were a man of action, I should fight against." Being condemned to three days' imprisonment, Comte gathered up ink, paper, sealing-wax, and an armful of books of poetry and romance, and marched solemnly to jail as if for a stay of three months. After his release he was let alone. By his own standard, he was doing far more for real revolution than all the street-barricades when he helped inaugurate the Polytechnic Association at the close of 1830. Of this he was vice-president for four years. Its aim was to institute free lectures in science for the benefit of the working-class, rather with a view to broadening their general intelligence and strengthening their civic sympathies than with a directly utilitarian purpose. In connection with this Association, or, later, independently, Comte delivered popular courses on astronomy at the Town Hall of the 3rd Arrondissement every year for eighteen years. Of these efforts news went down to Montpellier, and occasioned perplexity in the soul of the excellent mother. Her letters brimmed over with solicitude for Auguste's health; and if, she remarked, he did not get paid for the lectures, he ought to spare himself such labour. And what was his object in teaching workmen astronomy? To add to her worries, the

family health was poor (Alix's especially), and Caroline's reprobate father had been going about the neighbourhood of Montpellier, giving himself airs as a kinsman of the Comtes; and Comte senior, being invaded in his office by the old actor (disreputable in appearance, she hints), had promptly and irately dismissed him. "To-morrow," the anxious mother wrote on an April 3, "is the day of Saint Isidore, your patron; I shall go to Mass and invoke him on your behalf, so that God, who can do all things, may protect you."

From 1832 to 1852 Comte served the Polytechnic School as mathematics tutor, at a salary of £80; and from 1838 to 1844 he earned £120 at the Polytechnic as Entrance Examiner. From 1835 to 1848 he taught at the Institution Laville at £120 a year; but when Comte lost the Polytechnic tutorship in 1844 Laville began to lessen his valuation of a man who was distasteful to academic bureaucrats, and he dropped Comte from his staff in 1848. While he was a pattern of conscientiousness in his tutorial and examining duties, Comte had independent, stoical, and obstinate manners, and never attempted to make himself agreeable to official personages and authorities. In 1832 he dreamed of the establishment, at the College of France, of a Chair of History of the Positive Sciences, and proposed it to Guizot, Minister of Public Instruction. Nobody could have filled the professorship so well as himself. The project was not realized till 1892, when Pierre Laffitte,[1] a devoted disciple of Comte, was appointed to the Chair of the History of Sciences. In 1832 Comte publicly declared his disagreement with the Saint-Simonians, and caustically observed

[1] B. 1823, d. 1903; Comte's literary executor; author of *Positive Science of Morals* (trans. Carey Hall); mainly by his efforts a monument was erected to Comte in the Place de la Sorbonne, Paris, in 1902.

to a correspondent that Father Enfantin might, with frightful truth, declare: "I am the State!"—the enthusiastic sect now being adorers of the blue-coated and white-vested prophet.

There was perpetual friction between husband and wife, varied by intervals of good comradeship, even if not affection. In the days of the cholera (1832) Comte's mother had urged him to leave Paris, and come alone to Montpellier. Auguste very emphatically replied he would not leave Caroline, and either he would visit Montpellier with her or not at all. Early in 1833 Caroline left his roof for four or five months. Friend Valat had tried to assuage the rising tempers, but in vain; and Comte sat over his books in a melancholy sort of peace. She returned somewhat uncheerfully, and, in the same year, was ill with small-pox, which disfigured her face. Married intimacy ceased in 1834. A further break with the past took place in 1837, when Auguste's excellent mother died. His habits became increasingly solitary, and he spent much leisure in the study, in original texts, of Virgil, Horace, Plautus, Dante, Ariosto, Tasso, Milton, Shakespeare, Byron, Cervantes, Calderon. Music always attracted him, and he frequented the Italian Opera and such concerts as included Mozart, Handel, Haydn, Beethoven, in their programmes. Or he pored over the treasures of the museums, unfailingly enchanted with everything that revealed the grand human evolution. When domestic affairs were anarchic he fled to the streets, and tramped alone in long walks. Another relief occurred from time to time when, as examiner of candidates, he travelled in the provinces. He was a stern and unbending examiner, and tales of his awful impartiality were repeated for a generation.

A vivid picture of Auguste Comte as he appeared in

1836 was given after his death[1] by James Hamilton, a Scottish writer who, as a young man, received private lessons from him in mathematics. Hamilton records how—

> Daily as the clock struck eight on the *horloge* of the Luxembourg, while the ringing of the hammer on the bell was yet audible, the door of my room opened; and then entered a man—short, rather stout, almost what one might call sleek, freshly shaven, without vestige of whisker or moustache. He was invariably dressed in a suit of the most spotless black, as if going to a dinner-party; his white neckcloth was fresh from the laundress's hands, and his hat shining like a racer's coat. He advanced to the arm-chair prepared for him in the centre of the writing-table, laid his hat on the left-hand corner, his snuff-box was deposited on the same side, beside the quire of paper placed in readiness for his use, and dipping the pen twice into the ink-bottle, then bringing it to within an inch of his nose to make sure that it was properly filled, he broke silence: "We have said that the chord *AB*," etc. For three-quarters of an hour he continued his demonstration, making short notes as he went on to guide the listener in repeating the problem alone; then, taking up another *cahier* which lay beside him, he went over the written repetition of the former lesson. He explained, corrected, or commented, till the clock struck nine; then, with the little finger of the right hand, brushing from his coat and waistcoat the shower of superfluous snuff which had fallen on them, he pocketed his snuff-box, and, resuming his hat, he, as silently as when he came in, made his exit by the door, which I rushed to open for him. This man of few words was the Aristotle or Bacon of the nineteenth century.
>
> Thus for a year I daily sat a listener, not always attentive, and to the last but dimly conscious of the

[1] In *Chambers's Journal*, June 19, 1858.

> value of lessons which I can never forget in their higher meaning, though the angles and curves which they explained have long since become to me more meaningless than hieroglyphics.

Hamilton amusingly tells how Comte scathingly corrected the young pupil's bad French, and how, on a yet more thrilling occasion, he actually fell asleep at the lesson, and awoke in time to see Comte striding majestically from the room, declining abject apologies. Then Hamilton goes on :—

> From that day I began to love him. Cold or abstracted as he seemed, the intellectual giant henceforth won almost imperceptibly on the youth. I could not feel, much less measure, his greatness; but I acquired an interest in the dry science he taught me, and, had I continued under his charge, I might have become a mathematician. I had been taught to fear, not to revere, my masters; if I had a liking for any, it had been in proportion to his laxness; and I now found myself half unconsciously and quite unaccountably gliding into a sort of affection for the most unapproachable, the most uncongenial of them all. I was then the most unreasonable of boy-mortals. I cannot, therefore, suppose that this feeling was due to the sway of pure reason over my mind; I can only think that it arose from an instinctive perception of the smothered kindliness which entered so largely into his composition.

In May, 1838, Caroline having received "visits" of an all-too-doubtful kind, a quarrel resulted in her leaving the house for three weeks. She came back of her own accord. Her husband warned her that the next time she left him would be the last; and he kept his word. That he was still forbearing in his attitude is shown by a passage in a letter which he addressed to Caroline, in September of this year, from a hotel at Avignon. He was engaged on an examination tour, and told her he

had put up at the self-same hotel in which, thirteen years previously, when newly married, they had spent a very happy day.

During this tour a singular incident befell. He received a letter from an old friend, a naval officer who was confined in a lunatic asylum near Grenoble, and Comte at once went to see him. The patient talked calmly, and disclosed to Comte his resolution to escape, detailing his plan with such intelligent detail that our philosopher forthwith interviewed the asylum director and demanded the sailor's release. The sceptical director would not consent. On his return to Paris, Comte begged the Minister of Marine to use his authority, and the officer was set free. But Clio, the Muse of History, bids us add that the poor man's insanity recurred in 1839; and death closed the tragedy.

English friendships began to cheer Comte. Sir David Brewster, in 1838, published an appreciation of the first two volumes of the *Philosophy* in the *Edinburgh Review*. In January, 1840, George Grote[1] visited Comte in Paris. George Henry Lewes[2] called on him in 1842, and ere long John Stuart Mill will come on our scene, though only through letters, and not in person.

The law-suit to which we alluded was a sequel to the Preface of Comte's sixth volume. Comte indignantly told his readers how his professional advancement at the Polytechnic had been checked by the reactionary manœuvres of a small circle of professors who disliked his scientific non-theological innovations; and he singled out M. Arago[3] as wielding a "disastrous influence."

[1] B. 1794, d. 1871; friend of Bentham, James Mill, and J. S. Mill; one of the founders of University College (London University).

[2] B. 1817, d. 1878; author of *Biographical History of Philosophy* and *Life of Goethe*.

[3] B. 1786, d. 1853; physicist and astronomer; secretary of the French Academy of Sciences.

No. 19 RUE MONSIEUR-LE-PRINCE, PARIS
(Comte resided here 1841–1857)

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Comte's publisher trembled, and submitted the proof to Arago. That distinguished astronomer composed a statement which was printed as a label and affixed to copies of vol. vi. It ran to the effect that the publisher, noting the character of M. Comte's Preface, had consulted M. Arago, and M. Arago thought that M. Comte's animus dated from the moment when M. Arago appointed M. Sturm, an illustrious geometer, to a post at the Polytechnic in preference to M. Comte. The tribunal to which Comte carried this question decreed that the labels must be removed, and, further, that the agreement binding Comte to issue later editions through this particular firm should be dissolved.

On July 15, 1841, Comte and his wife removed to a flat at No. 10 rue Monsieur-le-Prince, south of the river and south-west of Notre Dame. This "apartment," reached by a short staircase, contained a dining-room, salon, and library looking on the street, a series of chambers ending in a bedroom, and the housekeeper's rooms.[1]

The Preface of vol. vi was dated July 19, 1842. On August 5 Caroline finally left Comte, and they never met again. Whatever affection she had ever felt had vanished. He was clearly not destined to any brilliant official or political position such as she had once, and not unreasonably, hoped his talents would attain. She would, she said, live quietly in the Batignolles quarter in northern Paris, and still watch, with interest, his philosophic course. Comte allowed her £120 a year till his income was severely lessened, and then he paid £80. Even after the separation echoes of the old conflict

[1] The house remains, and Comte's rooms are still preserved in Positivist keeping (1920). A plan was made in 1895 by Thomas Sulman, to whom we owe various pictures, carefully and lovingly drawn, of spots connected with Comte's memory.

were heard, Madame Comte's cause being energetically defended by her friend (and, for a while, Comte's disciple), the famous Littré.[1] In 1851 Littré expostulated with Comte on account of what he considered his over-harsh attitude. Comte replied with a sad history of his married life, and asserted that in 1842 it was "an indescribable course of conduct" on her part which drove Madame Comte to the final separation. Even then she was persuaded Comte would, in three months, implore her to return.

In leaving Comte, his wife, almost unconsciously, rendered him an immense service by placing the solitary man in charge of Sophie Bliaux.[2] This Frenchwoman, of peasant origin, and quite uneducated in the academic sense, thus became housekeeper and handmaid to France's most illustrious philosopher. Her loyalty, patience, feminine insight in emergency, and practical good sense combined to make her one of the most admirable figures in the drama which, as we shall see, yet held in store for Auguste Comte a great exaltation and a great tragedy.

[1] B. 1801, d. 1881; author of the great Dictionary of the French Language; fought in the Revolution of 1830; member of the National Assembly, 1871, and a Life Senator. Madame Comte died in 1877, having received for about twenty years a pension from the Ministry of Public Instruction.

[2] B. at Oissy (Somme), 1804; married to Martin Thomas; d. December, 1861.

V

FRENCH AND ENGLISH FRIENDS

JOHN STUART MILL first wrote to Comte in November, 1841. In the following January Comte despatched his first letter to Mill, and congratulated him on preferring philosophy to the fashionable ambition of a seat in Parliament,[1] and he mentioned, in passing, that profound esteem for Mill had been expressed by Madame D'Arusmont.[2] The correspondence then ran on for some years, and we here take rapid glances at Comte's letters. In March, 1842, he was giving Mill his judgment on British psychology—the Protestant masses were not favourable to the Positivist reorganization of thought (it was true!), and, on the other hand, the choice spirits were more prepared for it than anywhere else (also true!). A little later he told Mill he had recently had a chat with G. H. Lewes, who was introduced by Armand Marrast.[3] In July he mentioned (one fancies he did it with a grimace) that "to-morrow" he would have the painful duty of commencing at the Town Hall, Paris, an examination of 200 young fellows, aged eighteen

[1] But Mill was M.P. for Westminster in 1865–68!

[2] Frances Wright, b. Dundee, 1795, d. 1852; advocate of Freethought, woman suffrage, abolition of slavery; lived in Paris 1821–24; visited France 1838 (when Comte may have met her); married M. D'Arusmont; liberated a number of slaves in U.S.A., where she died.

[3] B. 1801, d. 1852; a Liberal revolutionary; editor of *La Tribune;* mayor of Paris, 1848, and President of the Constituent Assembly.

to twenty, who were candidates for admission into the Polytechnic. This hard labour would continue thirty days; and then he must set off on his annual examining tour through Rouen, Rennes, La Flèche, Angoulême, Toulouse, Montpellier. Some months subsequently he was describing the incident of the timid publisher and the Olympian professor Arago. In February, 1843, he related how, at a popular lecture, he had proclaimed, before 400 people, during three hours, the moral superiority of Positivism over theology; and no protest had been raised, and nobody left the hall during the discourse. In the same year he expressed fears, which were to be realized, that he would lose his Polytechnic position, and in that event might lose his post at the Laville Institute. At the same period Comte was reading Mill's newly-issued two volumes of the *Logic*, which contained a passage praising the Positivist philosopher. In the winter (1843) he met Mill's friends, the Austins.[1] A rift in the philosophic lute revealed itself when Comte and Mill discussed the Woman question. Comte had read Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, and was impressed by that "strange work," but.....well, he rather suspected woman of inaptitude for abstract thought, and, in practical life, of being capable of only "secondary administration." We can imagine that these considerations did not make a very lively appeal to the future author of the *Subjection of Women!* Now and then Comte alluded to books he was studying. Once it was Vico,[2]

[1] John Austin, b. 1790, d. 1859; celebrated jurist; friend of Romilly, Bentham, and Carlyle; he married Sarah Taylor, of Norwich. The Austins lived in Paris 1844-48, when Napoleon III emerged. Austin exclaimed, "By God, he is a scoundrel," and quitted France!

[2] B. 1668, d. 1744; author of a treatise (*Scienza Nuova*) which traced social laws. "Uniform ideas," he said, "arising among

for whose work, with reservations, he professed great esteem. At another time it was Saint Augustine's *City of God*, and in this connection Comte remarked: "We [Positivists] are the true successors of the great men of the Middle Ages." He breathed the hope that he might some day found a "Positive Review."[1] In 1844 Mill became aware of Comte's money difficulties, in consequence of being deprived of his Polytechnic examinership. A timely gift of 6,000 francs was the result, the contributors being George Grote and two men whom Comte had not personally met—Raikes Currie, M.P., a banker, and Sir W. Molesworth, M.P. Mill gently hinted that Comte might be well advised to practise economy! Comte, who had rather painfully discovered that the English purses were now closed, and also perceived that his path and Mill's were diverging, replied (January, 1846) somewhat reproachfully. He ended the letter with a Parthian shot at the English unreadiness to give ampler help to a distressed prophet: "Perhaps the rich will some day regret having acted less well [*mal agi*] than they might towards the Philosophers, who will endeavour to shield their [the rich men's] social existence against a vigorous popular reaction!" One is not surprised that in September of the same year Mill wrote his final, though amicable, letter to Comte. We may here record that, eight years after Comte's death, Mill expressed a judicious and not

nations widely separated in space and time, and cut off from all contact with one another, must have some common groundwork of truth."

[1] But he did not. In 1878 Laffitte established, as the organ of Positivism, *La Revue Occidentale*. We may here note that the present (1920) French organ, ed. Dr. Hillemand, is the *Revue Positiviste Internationale* (six issues yearly), and the English is the monthly *Positivist Review*, founded by E. S. Beesly in 1894, and now edited by S. H. Swinny.

at all unkindly estimate[1] of the Positivist philosophy and religion.

About this time Comte gave monthly dinners to a trio of friends, MM. Lenoir, Charles Bonnin (whom he used to call his first disciple), and Thalès Bernard. The last was contemporary in outlook. Bonnin, who, as a youth of seventeen, had seen the opening of the Revolution and had been a friend of the great Carnot, often startled his fellow diners with his wrathful judgments on the Girondins, and his regrets that the Tuileries was not burned down.[2] Lenoir had a courtly, eighteenth-century air, and he would talk of his famous friend Ampère. Young Pierre Laffitte occasionally joined the circle. Another figure added to Comte's environment was Littré, who had (in 1844) published a frank tribute to the Positive philosophy. Laffitte had taken a lodging near Comte's apartment, and frequently called on him, every Monday evening from 7.30 to 9 being devoted to an intimate conversation of Master and Disciple. As 9 o'clock struck the young man rose, but the talk often continued as they stood. The two enjoyed many walks in the neighbourhood of Paris, especially to the park at Sceaux. Years ago—so Comte told Laffitte—he (with Caroline) had here sheltered one day under the trees from the rain when a wolf, driven by a like motive, kept him company till the storm abated, no hostile show being made by either the philosopher or the beast (if one may so term a creature so respectful towards French learning). Laffitte would walk home with the Master from the Sunday lectures, and they occasionally stopped to take an ice at a little café which had once been

[1] In *Auguste Comte and Positivism*, 1865; reprinted from the *Westminster Review*.

[2] His dream was fulfilled in 1871.

frequented by Grimm and Diderot. Comte sometimes let Laffitte use his opera ticket, and the disciple particularly remembered an evening when they went together to hear Grisi sing in *La Norma*, and Comte exchanged a few friendly words with a lame gentleman who leaned on a stick—the grandson of the celebrated Baron d'Holbach, author of *The System of Nature*.

In the days we are now speaking of France was agitated by new movements of radicalism. F. C. M. Fourier's[1] plan of Phalansteries—labour settlements and farms, each the home of some 1,700 citizens—had attracted much attention. Cabet[2] had excited many imaginations by the publication of his *Voyage to Icaria* (1842), with its Utopian pictures of harmonious industrial communes, and he was seeing visions of happy farm colonies in the United States. Comte and Laffitte in their walks may sometimes have passed a newly-married couple from the Rhineland—Karl Marx and Jennie; and perchance, as Comte and Laffitte chatted of Positivism, they may have jostled Karl Marx talking eagerly of economics and capitalists with his friend the poet Heine. There was a king on the throne, and republicanism in the air.

Towards the end of April, 1843, a group of Parisian workmen, who were always on the watch for opportunities of instruction and had regretted the absence of free lectures on star-land, were told by a companion, Pierre Buisson, a goldbeater, that Sunday lectures, free to all, were being given on astronomy at the Petits-Pères mairie by M. Auguste Comte. Thus it came about that, on a Sunday in May, the select bourgeois audience saw seven proletarians march in and take places on the front benches, "a little to the left of the lecturer," says one

[1] B. 1772, d. 1837.

[2] B. 1788, d. 1856.

of the seven, Fabien Magnin,[1] who told the tale in 1878. During three successive annual courses the group, increased to a dozen or so, and then yet more, faithfully followed the lectures on solar system, stars, and natural law; and they applauded heartily, with face and voice, whenever the philosopher dropped into apparent digressions (which yet were part of the plan) on human evolution, the decline of the Gods, and the coming triumph of industrial republics, peace, and science. Whatever others might think of Fourier, Cabet, and the rest, Comte was the man for the joiner, the goldbeater, the tailor, the compositor, and the clockmaker.

"With this man and this programme we are saved!" they said one to another.

What, then, could be more natural than the proposition of Alphonse Darche, mechanic, that the proletariat of Paris —or, to be more precise, some twenty of them— should march in a body to the lecturer's house, and thank him for the excellent fare they had enjoyed?

Agreed! And on Sunday, August 17, 1845, a score of working-men assembled at the rendezvous, which was, one surmises, a certain cabaret where they met after the lectures. On comparing notes, it turned out that nobody had exact information as to where the philosopher lived. Then began one of the most singular pilgrimages Paris had ever beheld. Fabien Magnin and his comrades tramped all around the Latin Quarter and its vicinity, through street after street, inspecting, inquiring, pausing, restarting. The August sun blazed, and a straggler now and then lapsed to the rear and disappeared. For more than three hours the valiant remnant trudged on, dusty and invincible. At length, about 4 p.m., eight weary

[1] B. 1810, d. 1884; a joiner. He was buried at Père-Lachaise, near Comte's tomb. "There are so many good people in the world," he used to say, "that it is a joy to have lived in it."

voyagers landed on the Isle of the Blest—namely, the threshold of No. 10 rue Monsieur-le-Prince. It must have been a joy to see the comely face of Sophie, and to hear her reply that M. Comte was at home. The names of the Eight were these—Darche, Buisson, Fili, Lefèvre, Guilbert, Gros-jean, Simon, Magnin. "Comte received us very cordially," relates Magnin, "and was much touched by our action. We had a long and interesting conversation, and when we were leaving he presented each of us with a copy of the *Discourse on the Positive Spirit.*"

The *Discourse* (published in 1844)[1] formed the Introduction to the book of *Popular Astronomy;* that is, it reproduced the lectures on the intellectual and social aspects of Positivism which Magnin and his friends so warmly applauded. Sometimes these thoughts were packed into one three-hour lecture, as Comte told Mill; sometimes they were divided among several Sundays. Comte said: —

> The preponderance that I have assigned to Astronomy in this first systematic endeavour to furnish a Positive education is fully justified by the history of that science, which shows that it has always hitherto been the chief motor in the great intellectual revolutions of the race.

When men began to understand something of the motions and regularities of the sun, moon, and stars, they put aside Fetishism, and worshipped the Gods who were supposed to control the heavenly bodies; this was a revolution from Fetishism to Polytheism. When Greek science applied mathematical reasoning to these motions and attained a natural theory, the Greeks realized another

[1] English translation by E. S. Beesly, one of Comte's most prominent followers in England: b. 1831, d. 1915; Professor of History at University College, London.

revolution, and (among the thinking few) Monotheism displaced Polytheism.

> And, lastly, the systematic rise of modern Positivity, tending openly to create a new philosophic régime, is essentially a consequence of the great astronomical reformation begun by Copernicus, Kepler, and Galileo.

Comte, however, went on to say that, "when once all minds have reached the state of true Positivity, the course of intellectual progress will be continued under a new philosophic impulse emanating directly from the science of morals." In the course of these lectures he stated the six meanings of the term *Positive;* that is, *real* as opposed to imaginary, *useful* as distinct from unprofitable, *certain* as opposed to indecisive, *precise* instead of vague, *organic* in the sense of constructive and related to historical explanations, and seeking to develop orderly and helpful new ideas rather than abruptly negating the old; and *relative* as opposed to absolute. (In later writings Comte added a seventh meaning—namely, *sympathetic*—implying that the whole reasoning process should be directed by goodwill towards humanity.)

Some members of Comte's audiences would have actually, as children, witnessed the Revolution of 1789, and would follow with close attention his comments on the spiritual aspect of that great event. As a matter of fact, he urged, the modern Revolution had endured five hundred years; that is, since the close of the Middle Ages (1300). It was caused first by the collapse of the old Catholic theology and its Protestant sequel, and next by the habit of trying to order human affairs by abstract phrases (Divine Right, Sovereignty of the People, "all men are created equal," "rights of man," etc.) instead of scientific study of facts and an education based on science. Comte recognized, he said, that human order

and progress depended upon the action of two classes—a small class of "Entrepreneurs" (captains of industry, expert directors), and a large class of Operatives; the smaller class organizing social labour, and the larger class executing it. Not "political rights" but social amelioration should be the purpose of the working classes. But the true regeneration of society was impossible until a spiritual reorganization had been effected. What was wanted for workmen was, first, education of the normal kind; secondly, regular work. The fanciful hopes of theology

> have led believers to disdain and neglect progress in this life, or to put it aside by a sort of perpetual adjournment, as was only natural, considering its trifling importance in comparison with the prospect of eternal bliss which was to be an immeasurable compensation for every present misery.

And Comte expected readier support for the modern social philosophy from the proletariat than from the theologians, politicians, lawyers, sophists, and rhetoricians of the upper and middle classes.

VI

CLOTHILDE

In the little town of Méru, twenty-five miles north-west of Paris, a marriage took place, both in the civil manner and the Catholic, on September 28, 1835. Our opening chapter mentioned the birth of the bride, Charlotte Clothilde Joséphine, daughter of Captain Marie and of Dame Henriette Joséphine de Ficquelmont. Her brothers, somewhat younger than herself, were Maximilien and Léon.

Clothilde, now twenty years of age, was graceful in figure, with blond hair, sympathetic eyes, rosy cheeks—the heightened colour perhaps denoting the tendency to consumption which her friends perceived all too late. Her spirit was gentle rather than sentimental; and her clear intelligence, inclining to serious reflection, had also a capacity for agreeable humour. We may conjecture that she derived a humanist outlook from her mother, who was interested in social reform, thoughtful towards the poor and the working masses, and, though nominally Catholic, held what to-day we might call Modernist views. Interesting sketches (pastels) by her hand are still preserved. She had feminine insight, and had already feared that the bridegroom, Amédée de Vaux, who had spent some time in the island of Mauritius, lacked energy and a manly self-confidence. As a matter of fact, he frequently gambled. After the marriage the Marie family removed to Paris, leaving the young couple at Méru, where De Vaux succeeded Captain Marie in

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a tax-collectorship. During four years the incidents were simple—seaside visits, a child dying at birth, and the rest—and behind all lay the fact that De Vaux was not the sort of man to develop Clothilde's affection.

In June, 1839, De Vaux manœuvred that his wife should pay a visit to her brother-in-law. Smoke was seen to rise thickly from the tax-collector's office. An Inspector of Finance arrived, prepared to make suspicious inquiries. But De Vaux had escaped to Belgium, having burned account books, and nevertheless left ample enough evidence of falsifications and forgery. He wrote from Liége, describing himself as poor and confessing he had squandered the public funds. Silence followed. The Marie family never heard of him after 1840.

Captain Marie's income was small; he could do little for the deserted wife. A rich uncle undertook to pay, for Clothilde's use, 600 francs a year to her mother. He kept his promise, though Madame Marie judiciously concealed the arrangement from her husband—the bluff Captain not being too economical. On one occasion Clothilde was glad to borrow fifteen francs from Maximilien. Life came near to a struggle. After residing for a while with relatives she took a modest flat in the Rue Payenne; she employed the sad hours in reading and writing, but frequently visited her parents, whose residence was near. The aristocratic gateway (of an ancient mansion) of rue Pavée, 24, led to the courtyard upon which the Maries' house looked. Auguste Comte often passed through this gateway. He was tutor of the Polytechnic mathematics class, which Maximilien attended. In October, 1844, he met, at her parents' house, Clothilde de Vaux.

Her attitude to him, as to all, was cheerful and companionable. But her unfortunate marriage had clouded her life. And it is known—from her own

avowal, indeed—that she had formed an attachment, very sincere but innocent, for some man whose name has never been ascertained without doubt. The road of this love was closed by her own honest will; but the effect would seem to have remained, surrounding her as if with a subtle and invisible veil, so that.....

Why should we speculate? Let us try, as far as possible, to record, rather than analyse.

Maximilien had not long been married to a very young girl. Many years afterwards, when an aged widow, she would describe Comte's first meeting with her sister-in-law. Comte was slightly bald, a lock of hair over his forehead being arranged in the Napoleon style; one eye inclined to water. His voice, excellent for the platform, had a hesitation in private converse. When he left after this interview Clothilde exclaimed (we may be sure, with a smile): "How ugly he is!"[1]

We have no chronicle of the succeeding winter. But we can infer something of the movement, the quest, the surprises, the perturbations, that thrilled the soul of this philosopher—now aged forty-six to forty-seven—if we take up these letters and penetrate beneath their formalities:—

Wednesday, April 30, 1845 (noon).

MADAME:

Knowing by experience how difficult it is to leave off the reading of *Tom Jones*, having once begun it, for whatever reason, I am hastening to send you a translation which will save you from having to enjoy this admirable masterpiece through the medium of an unsatisfactory paraphrase. As I have the original work, you will not inconvenience me in the least by keeping this copy as long as you please.

[1] This is one of many intimate details reported in a recent book, *L'Amoureuse histoire d'Auguste Comte* (1917), by M. Charles de Rouvre, grandson of Maximilien Marie.

If I appear to be over-solicitous in my attention, I must plead as my excuse the satisfaction I feel in giving you pleasure.

Pray accept, Madame, on this occasion, the most sincere assurance of the affectionate regard of

Your devoted servant,

ATE. COMTE.

Thursday, May 1, 1845.

Your kindness makes me very happy and very proud, Monsieur. I feel too impatient to wait for a better opportunity of telling you how much pleasure *Tom Jones* is giving me. Since your superiority does not prevent you from being "all things to all men," I look forward with much pleasure to having a talk with you on the subject of this little masterpiece; and I hope that your beautiful and noble teachings may sometimes find their way into my heart and mind.

Pray accept, Monsieur, with the expression of my gratitude, that of my great esteem.

DE VAUX, *née* MARIE.

Friday, May 2, 1845 (2 p.m.).

MADAME:

Neither can I wait for the happy occasion of our meeting to express to you how much I am touched by the kind and gracious reception you deign to accord to a very small mark of attention. .....The value that you are good enough to attach to my conversation emboldens me to say that it would be a great satisfaction to me to see the opportunities for it increased as far as you think proper. I have often been judged somewhat unsociable, having failed to find in others a disposition of mind, and, still more, of heart, sufficiently in harmony with my own.....The ease and confidence which, I am happy to say, I feel in the society of your relations should clearly point out to you my natural tendency duly to appreciate your kind and agreeable

> conversation. Besides the elevated tone and nobleness of sentiment that seem natural to all your interesting family, a melancholy coincidence in the circumstances of our lives forms a still more special bond between you and myself.....

We have quoted the opening of a correspondence which extended to 181 letters, and closed with tears that even yet, after three generations, seem warm.[1]

It was not long before a stage was reached which will be clearly enough understood from a few lines of citation:—

> *Comte.*—Since I cannot, alas, become younger, why are not you, Madame, less beautiful and less lovable, so as to compensate a little for the fatal disparity of my moral youthfulness and my physical maturity!.....I rejoice in the happy coincidence of the sweet re-animation of my moral nature due to you, with the dawning elaboration of my second great work.[2].....What a wonderful contrast it puts before me when I compare it with the sad state of repressed feeling into which I was helplessly plunged when I began, fifteen years ago, my fundamental work,[3] which was almost entirely executed under this painful pressure.....These precious emotions, these tender effusions, these delicious tears..... (Saturday, May 17, 1845.)

[1] See the *Confessions and Testament of Auguste Comte, and His Correspondence with Clothilde de Vaux*, a translation made under the direction of Albert Crompton. Several members of the Crompton family were active in the Positivist Movement in England. Albert (b. 1843, d. 1908) was one of the founders of the Church of Humanity at Liverpool, but did not live to see the erection of the remarkable Temple in that city which is now associated with the leadership of Mr. Sydney Style. An entire branch of the family—Paul and Gladys Crompton and their six children—went down with the *Lusitania*, May, 1915.

[2] He was brooding over the plan of his four-volume *Positive Politics, or Treatise of Sociology, Instituting the Religion of Humanity.*

[3] *Positive Philosophy;* 1830.

Clothilde.—I have suffered too much, Monsieur, not to be at least sincere; and if I have not replied to your letter of Saturday, it is because it caused me painful feelings.....If I had not accustomed myself, for some time past, to hide my feelings, I should have inspired you with pity rather than love, I am sure. During the past year I have been wondering each night if I should have strength to live through the next day..... (Wednesday, May 21.)

That last sentence perplexed him. Meanwhile he was philosophically plotting. They had talked of the social significance of religious observances, as distinct from scholastic theology. Mme. de Vaux had supposed he disdained the ancient customs because he abandoned the God-doctrine as inadequate for the world's needs. As June 3 was the day of S. Clothilde in the Roman calendar, Comte spent hours of the preceding day in writing an essay on the value of commemorating the worthy Dead; and we may suppose Sophie carried the manuscript to the Rue Payenne. Fragments of the letter may be given :—

I attach great importance to being considered by you as not less free from irreligious or metaphysical prejudices than from purely theological ones. As a fact, this has long been my position. But, perceiving lately that you still had grave doubts on the subject, I secretly promised myself that I would take advantage of a happy anniversary to remove them. To-morrow is the festival of S. Clothilde, your patron saint.....There is indisputably a spontaneous tendency in Positivism to honour every kind of nobility of character by a sound appreciation of the part each has taken in the fundamental evolution of humanity.....Every really honourable life may lawfully aspire to some solemn commemoration, whether in the bosom of his family, in his city, the State, his nation, or, finally, by the

> whole race.....The Positive School of Philosophy places the spiritual re-organization in the first rank of importance, abandoning altogether, therefore, all fruitless political agitation.... In the daily conflict of forces which sets human affairs in motion women are, from their peculiarly affective organization, habitually disposed to support the moral influence exerted by the Speculative over the Active power.

Next day Clothilde, accompanied by her mother and her brother Maximilien, called at Comte's house to thank him for his literary offering. Maximilien was on very friendly terms. His young and musical wife (whose pianoforte playing delighted Comte) expected to become a mother, and the mathematics tutor was asked to act as sponsor at the christening. Comte's notes to Maximilien at this period were familiar. He would tell him how a nervous prostration cancelled a Sunday lecture; how he spent sleepless nights, and how he abjured solid food, sipped lemonade, and tried to read his favourite poets. A letter to Stuart Mill hinted at fear of gastric fever.

Clothilde also had her literary zeal. She was now preparing for issue in a Paris journal a novelette entitled "Lucie"—a love-story, touched with melancholy, and told in a series of letters. It was printed in June issues of the *National*, edited by Marrast. Short as it was, it exposed a social evil in the law which allowed no divorce to the innocent wife of a felon and convict. One of the persons in the story—Lucie herself—observed that "It is unworthy of a noble heart to diffuse its sorrow"—a saying which Comte admired.[1]

[1] As he did these other sayings of Clothilde's: "What pleasures can surpass those of loving service?"; "Our race, more than any, requires duties to evoke feelings"; "We have all still one foot in the air over the threshold of truth"; "The wicked often stand more in need of pity than the good"; "Nothing in life is irrevocable save death."

Clothilde, reflecting at leisure, came to the sane conclusion that it would be best to tell her admirer the secret of her heart:—

> In the name of the interest I feel towards you, I beg of you, try to overcome an inclination which will make you miserable. Love without hope kills both body and soul; it mows one down like a blade of grass. For two years I have loved a man from whom I am separated by a double obstacle. I have tried in vain to change this fatal sentiment into maternal feeling, sisterly tenderness or devotion; it has conquered me under every form. It is only since I had the courage to get away that I have felt able to live. (June 5.)

The latter words perhaps refer to her residing in her solitary apartment in the Rue Payenne. In replying to Clothilde's confession, Comte hinted at his distress of mind, which had recalled the time when he plunged into the Seine, and was rescued—"against my will." On such avowals she sensibly refrained from comment; and on July 19 she agreed to meet him at her parents' house on Mondays and Fridays, and to give him a call once a week, for, she said, "I have always liked the company of superior men; one may gain so much from them." And assuming that her mathematical friend understood all this as she did herself, she was presently giving him news of Madame Maximilien's confinement and of household agitation caused by the baby's illness—"since midnight at the point of death." With such news she conjoined the pleasant item that Marrast had offered her regular employment in reviewing, for the *National*, "everything written and published on the subject of education, both secular and religious," and also stories by feminine authors. Hereupon Comte composed a long letter, and warned her that "one of the consequences of

the present spirit of journalism, so lacking in all true intellectual discipline, is a reckless attempt to deal with all subjects of interest alike, with as little discernment as exists in the ordinary conversation of the usual run of men"!—a criticism which has not lost its truth in 1920. But he compromised with Madame de Vaux's feelings by saying: "While explaining to you, my dear friend, the intrinsic frivolity of the principal proposal made to you, I do not intend to produce in you any discouragement".....

Clothilde kept her promise as to interviews. On Wednesdays she called at Rue Monsieur-le-Prince, and the armchair, covered with green cloth, which she generally occupied, became to Comte an altar, cherished till his last days.

On August 17 occurred the pilgrimage of Magnin and the valiant proletarians already described.

The church of Saint-Paul-saint-Louis, near the Rue Pavée, has an ornate classical front, with columns and heraldic emblems. Here, in the baptistery, on August 28, members of the Marie family assembled for the christening of the baby ("point of death" happily forgotten), who was carried by our ever-helpful Sophie. Madame de Vaux and Comte were sponsors. After the ceremony the group adjourned to the salon at Captain Marie's house; congratulations and chat enlivened the air; and Clothilde, who was festively dressed in white, greeted her fellow-sponsor French-wise and innocently enough with a kiss. It meant far more to him than to her. But he remained faithful to the formalities, and gravely presented Madame Maximilien with an essay on Baptism in relation to Positivism. Though not sharing the Catholic belief, he observed in this essay that they might yet see in the ceremony "the only means allowed to us by the existing state of anarchy to uphold in any way

whatever the invaluable tendency which there has been from the beginning to consecrate all human life."[1]

The kiss had a double effect. It moved Comte very deeply; it slightly perturbed the Marie family, and on the next Monday they made a little rural excursion and avoided the philosopher's visit. Comte's letters glowed and appealed.

An impulse—rare indeed in so self-possessed a soul as Clothilde's—suddenly inspired a very frank letter. Flinging aside the curtain of her solitude, she broke into a cry that was bitter, rather than affectionate:—

> Since my misfortunes my only dream has been motherhood; but I have always determined only to take as my partner a superior man and one capable of understanding the part he takes. If you think you can accept all the responsibilities belonging to family life, let me know..... (September 5.)

The most natural supposition in the world leads us to conclude that the sight of her sister-in-law's happiness, as she caressed her little Paul, had stirred this sad woman's soul. This was her master-motive; she forgot —but only for a tempestuous moment—that her own nature would imperiously decree that love alone must be the messenger of maternity.

An interview, troubled and passionate and disillusioning, ensued the next Sunday afternoon at the Rue Monsieur-le-Prince. Alone with Comte, whom she entirely respected as a sage, she saw, as in a lightning-flash, that love had not guided her in her impulse. On the other side, he—who had been denied woman's love in its purity, and had journeyed so many years in a wilderness of pain—saw in this beautiful Parisian, this virtually widowed heart, this gracious companion of his thoughts, both

[1] The baby Paul grew up to take part in the campaign of 1870; he died in Tonquin, 1886.

intimate fellowship and redemption. If ever he could break the bonds of his rigid mannerisms, he must have broken them that day, when he told of his loneliness, and when he honestly confessed that under the spell of her inspiration the Wood Galleries had lost the last remnant of painted allurement. Clothilde, in a kind of virginal breathlessness (if one may so speak), went home. Comte, in the most shattering crisis of his experience, was left struggling with an agony of doubt and defeat. The allurement—the painted allurement—would never again tempt. Purgatorial fire had cleansed that old stain. But the vision of a happy fatherhood—open and acknowledged—was darkened. The hope that his future social philosophy, his vast reorganizing creation of polity and ideal, might be sweetened and illumined by the influence of a woman's love—this, too, seemed lying in the dust.

Half dazed, he went out at five o'clock to De Blainville's monthly dinner. He hurried away as soon as politeness allowed. The night found him all but sleepless. He could sigh, with the ancient Hebrew: "I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me."

Fragments of letters will most effectively continue our story:—

> *Comte.*—On my knees, I beg of you. (September 8.)
>
> *Clothilde.*—I am incapable of giving myself without love. I felt that yesterday. (September 8.)
>
> *Comte.*—I do not think, notwithstanding these first fluctuations, that I need yet cease to consider myself already, until your final free decision, as Your affectionate husband. (September 9.)
>
> *Clothilde.*—I know what marriage is, and I know myself better than the most learned man in the world can know me. Do not, then, make the slightest remonstrance. (September 9.)

Comte.—You have inspired me with the only deep passion that I have ever felt. (September 10.)

Clothilde.—Please do not be angry with me, my dear friend; I am giving you all the best that can be offered to a man—the rest is not at my disposal. (September 13.)

Comte.—Alas! my divine Clothilde, why should I be angry with you?.....My last reflections have decided me now from conviction, as at first from deference, to follow your directions implicitly in everything concerning our relationship. (September 14.)

Clothilde.—I loved with all my strength one of whom I was worthy, one who loved me equally. He was living alone.....I have never met a man of purer and nobler feelings. Still, I could not understand.....The day when he explained, I believed, several times, that I was going to die.....He also had ties, and duties besides. (September 14.)

Comte.—My Clothilde, may your sweet friendship always tend to rectify my various faults. (September 16.)

Clothilde.—I have not yet met in any one but you so well-balanced a mind united with a heart craving so much for affection. (September 30.)

Clothilde stayed a few days with friends in the country. Palpitation and other signs of failing health had gently warned her, though all too gently; neither she nor physicians suspected the truth. The October atmosphere chilled her, and, though asked to remain longer, she hastened back to her beloved Paris. She was writing a new story ("Wilhelmine") for the journal, and dreamed that literature might pay. Meanwhile she borrowed one hundred francs from Comte, intending to repay in January. With this prose there mingled poetry when she gave him a lock of her blonde hair, woven into a heart-shape. The smouldering fire blazed, and Comte begged that he might be permitted to address her with

familiar *thou* and *thee*. We instantly detect the delicate retreating tone of her answer:—

> This mode of address would impair the harmony of our intercourse. At present there is more gratitude than graciousness in my heart; you must excuse this, for I cannot help it.

One mid-October evening he took her—as occasionally happened—to the opera. She felt ill as she returned home; and from this time onwards allusions to doctors, medicines, messages of inquiry sent through Sophie, and the like, throw ominous shadows over the correspondence. Little incidents lightened the creeping dusk—a family dinner of the Maries on a fine November day in the Bois de Boulogne with Comte as a guest; Clothilde's present of artificial flowers which she had made in the 1840-50 fashion; a kiss which he gave her, and which she good-humouredly (and without profounder feeling) declared she herself gave; a poem of her own which she copied out for him, "Thoughts of a Flower," and in which a stanza ran:—

> May no untimely frost my vigour slack,
> But sleep enfold me in the midst of pleasures:
> And nature spread before me all her treasures,
> When raptured to her feast of love I wake.[1]

When once, in a rush of half-pity for the man whose nights were so often sleepless, she vaguely spoke of a possible gift of herself, Comte's spirit leaped in expectance. But it was not long before she was saying, with her customary serene decision:—

> May I be able to prove to you better than by words my affection, esteem, and respect! Whatever be our fate, I hope that death alone will break the bond founded upon these feelings; and I offer you

[1] Albert Crompton's translation.

> the sweetness of this thought in exchange for those of which I have deprived you. (December 10.)

An almost amusing sidelight on their methods of companionship is cast by Comte's complaint that "your manners are often as ceremonious as if a third person were present!" A touch of pathos, too, enters in when Comte is much disturbed by her sarcastic recital of a visit which Marrast paid her, and in which he, at least, leaned over the line of propriety, Clothilde being securely self-defensive, of course. The close of 1845 had no consolations for her. Chest troubles increased. Sophie —sister of mercy to all the circle—often hurried to the Rue Payenne to assist the suffering Clothilde. The opening of 1846 heard her whispering lines of Elisa Mercœur.[1]

When composing the new story ("Wilhelmine," unpublished) Clothilde thought of introducing reflections on Marriage, and she asked Comte to write for her an essay on that subject, and to give it, if possible, a "romantic form." The romantic form was beyond his powers; but he was delighted at being requested to produce such an essay! He at once wrote his Philosophical Letter on Marriage, giving the union of the sexes a moral exaltation and a deep-seated social value. For example:—

> Between two beings so diverse, is their whole life too long to know one another thoroughly and to love one another aright?.....Marriage has been, by the metaphysical reasoning of our lawyers, reduced to the vulgar level of an ordinary temporal contract. A true reorganization will soon restore to it, more completely and more permanently, the august spiritual consecration which befits the first elementary bond of every human society.

[1] A poetess, who died (1835) at the age of twenty-six, and whose tomb adjoins that of Comte in Père-Lachaise.

Fate put an ironic footnote to this essay when on January 23 Comte wrote to J. Stuart Mill that he was both reducing his personal expenditure and necessarily lessening the allowance to Madame Comte. It so happened that the same evening Clothilde dined at Comte's apartment—this being the second such occasion.

Events passed in strange variety. In February she was spitting blood, yet she visited a picture exhibition. She was obliged to assure the philosopher yet once again: "I like you very much; it is not love, unfortunately for myself, more than for you, but it is a high-placed feeling such as comes to one perhaps but rarely in life." He was teaching his stubborn will to think of her now as rather a sister or daughter. Anxiety for her health had become very keen. She lightly remarked: "I cannot say that I am dying"; but she had to confess: "I am getting whiffs of fever again." One day Sophie visited Clothilde, and the two women talked heart to heart. Sophie came away in tears. Not only did Sophie carry letters and messages. Many a household need that was lacking in Madame de Vaux's sick-room—for such it now was—Sophie carried by her own goodwill or Comte's direction. Clothilde wrote her last letter to him (March 8) in a generous and sisterly spirit, and she ended: "I have many kind things to say to you, but I must stop for to-day. Be assured of my eternal affection." Days passed, and, still schooling himself in the hard education which purified him in pain and never gave him genuine love and caress, he could not perceive —nor did the Marie family perceive—that this poor Lady of Sorrows was dying.

Comte was at this time much embarrassed financially, and M. Captier, a cloth manufacturer, lent him 1,000 francs.

Clothilde's mother was at last alarmed. A strange rivalry of loves ensued, as natural as distressing. Madame Marie resented Comte's presence; and he was jealous of every moment which others cut off from his heart-broken interviews with the dying woman. On April 1 George Henry Lewes called to see the author of the *Positive Philosophy*, but was unable to meet Comte, who was at the rue Payenne. Next day—the day before Clothilde's 31st birthday—a priest administered Extreme Unction. The dying woman was emancipated from theology, but she complied with the wishes of her family. Once, alone with Comte, she murmured, as if in compassion: "You have not had a companion for long." At another time Comte wished to bar out Madame Marie herself from her daughter's room. He nervously contradicted the medical man's proposed treatment. Some sort of altercation occurred with the brother Maximilien and the old Captain Marie, and Comte broke down in his grief, kissed the captain's hands, and besought that he might not be forbidden to see Clothilde. Captain Marie promised as Comte wished, and when his daughter was manifestly growing weaker on Sunday (April 5) he sent a message to rue Monsieur-le-Prince.

Maximilien, seeing Comte approaching, told the kinsfolk; and, as they withdrew about two o'clock, Comte and Sophie took their place and watched. Clothilde lay in an alcove. Several times she repeated: "Comte, remember I do not deserve to suffer so!" He was kneeling at her bedside. Towards half-past three clear signs of the end revealed themselves. Pale and worn, Comte opened the door, and beckoned to the Maries, who sat in a room adjoining. All gathered round as Clothilde expired.

Comte carried a lock of her hair, freshly severed, to his rooms that evening.

Next morning he had a conversation with G. H. Lewes.

On Tuesday, April 7, Clothilde de Vaux was buried at Père-Lachaise cemetery.

The Marie family, judging by the usual social standard, were undoubtedly entitled to complain that Comte had, in his violent concentration of feeling, swept every one out of his path, and acted as if the dying woman were his exclusive own; and he had wounded the brother especially by angry reproaches. Letters and interviews — in which, among others, our old friend Lenoir figured — embittered several ensuing months, no final good coming out of it all. The old Captain, much perplexed among the conflicting currents, more than once displayed a spirit of reconciliation. A melancholy collection of objects, lent to Clothilde, was returned to Rue Monsieur-le-Prince. It contained the memorable *Tom Jones* and other books, and a variety of household articles. A few days before her death Clothilde had given Comte, in a glove-box, most of the letters she had received from him. But, in his methodical style, he had himself made copies before despatching.[1]

Henceforward, Clothilde was lovingly remembered each hour, each day. With tender care, all the things she had touched in Comte's apartment were preserved as sacred relics. Once a week he visited her tomb. On such an occasion he met her father. Both wept, they clasped hands, but neither spoke.

It would have been a far happier destiny for Comte, and probably lent a firmer balance to his doctrine of

[1] A large part of the details up to this point has been drawn from four vols. (in French, 1915-18) compiled by R. Teixeira Mendes, of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Sr. Mendes was vice-director with Miguel Lemos, who founded the Positivist Apostolate in Brazil in 1881. There is a Temple of Humanity at Rio.

womanhood, if, at a normal age, he could have married a lady of the type of Clothilde. Let Comte and certain devoted followers say what they will, France always possesses among her daughters multitudes of women as pure and finely intelligent as Clothilde. It was, indeed, inevitable that, if Comte was to construct a first-rank social philosophy, he must accord eminent places to the Labour question (as he did quite early) and to the Woman question. Logic and his soul would drive him to Clothilde, as they would otherwise have driven him to a Beatrice or a Laura. In any case, his genius, conscious of the decline of theology and metaphysical creeds and phrase-mongering, would sooner or later have linked the new feminine ideal with the epoch-making emancipation of Labour. In a vivid sense, he combined the two issues in his grateful recognition of the merits of his proletarian servant, Sophie Bliaux.

Motherhood, the love of Woman and Man, and the fundamental sacredness of Labour are commemorated in the Invocation which Comte appended in 1854 to his work on *Positive Politics*. He there speaks to Clothilde, and recalls the virtues of his mother Rosalie, and of his daily help Sophie. He thanks Clothilde for her chastening influence. Once he loved in sex-passion, now he venerates. Once he hoped to find in her a wife, but he had at length seen in her a loved daughter. In such a change of feeling he discovered a symbol of that devotion, whether to Woman or to Humanity, which can, in its best moments, rise above the baser Self. Catholic poetry imaged this devotion in the worship of Mary, mother of God and daughter of God ; and monastic poetry imaged this devotion in the service of a God who, as a divine whole, included the small human soul as part. Such was the meaning of the final passage of the *Politics* :—

> My actions, my thoughts, and my feelings centre around her who rules my Second Life [that is, 1844 onwards]. In this life, for eight years, a unique harmony has been developed between private manners and public relations. When my affection was far enough purified, I saw thee nobly accept my plan of legal adoption [as daughter]. The plan failed only through the disaster that befel us. Since thy influence has become solely subjective, Veneration has more and more prevailed over Attachment, while not detaching me from Benevolence; for Benevolence has always been fostered in my just efforts to make the world appreciate an Angel Unknown. If this blending of all woman-ward feelings[1] seems to imply a contradiction, it is owing to the coarseness of masculine instincts. It is foreshadowed by poetry and religion. And it prompts me to close this final Invocation by a very remarkable metaphor and aspiration, which I recite every morning. They come to us from the two sublime interpreters of the Middle Ages: "*O Virgin Mother, daughter of thy Son*" (Dante), and "*May I love thee more than myself, nor love myself except in loving thee*" (Thomas à Kempis).

Call this Positivism, call it Mysticism, call it Symbolism, or what you will. It was Comte's way of marking his conviction that the service of humanity would be the essence of future civilization, and that the woman-spirit would be more and more regarded as the truest representative of that essence.

[1] That is, man's feelings towards mother, wife, daughter.

VII

THE RELIGION OF HUMANITY

COMTE continued the popular lectures till 1848. We may note two or three incidents. In 1846, in commending the Positivist aim of commemorating all worthy careers, he exclaimed: "I hope that a public manifestation in honour of Joan of Arc will some day make up for the shameful glorification of Bonaparte"; and uproarious applause followed. In 1847 he put in a good word for the popular wineshops (*cabarets*), and the listeners cheered all the more for knowing that the speaker was a water-drinker. Laffitte, in the same year, had provided Comte with a summary of Cabet's *Voyage to Icaria*, and a lecture on Communism was the sequel. Some 200 Communists crowded to the meeting, and, though Comte dissented from the current Communism and Socialism, the proletariat had no difficulty in perceiving that they had his liberal sympathy. Sympathy, indeed, became an increasingly stronger note in the harmony of his thought. In one of the meditations (October, 1846) which he annually penned in the form of letters to Clothilde, he thanked her for the impulse she gave to his new constructive work (*Politics*):—

> At each stage of my new work, till interrupted by the fatal illness, I delighted to testify my gratitude for the involuntary aid which kindled my highest inspirations. Never had I felt so clearly the intense reality of the fundamental truth [*Great thoughts come from the heart*] proclaimed by the noble

> Vauvenargues,[1] the one thinker of the eighteenth century who spoke worthily of the heart, and whose intellectual and moral value offered so striking a parallel with yours—a parallel completed, alas, by the same untimeliness of death!

Another illustration of the same augmenting tendency is noticed in a letter (January, 1847) to his old nurse, who had sent him, from Montpellier, her New Year's greetings. "If," he replied, "I am now almost unknown in my natal city, it is comforting to remember that somebody there thinks kindly of me."

Beginning on New Year's Day, 1848, Comte instituted his daily reading of Thomas à Kempis's *Imitation of Christ* and Dante's epic of the *Vision* (or *Divine Comedy*); "each morning," he said, "a chapter of the one, each evening a canto of the other, and never ceasing to find beauties previously unseen, never ceasing to reap new fruits, intellectual or moral." He esteemed the *Imitation*, though mediæval,[2] as in a relative sense a noble mirror of devotion, and, by the alteration of the terms God, Jesus, etc., as capable of application, no doubt incomplete, to Humanity. We may cite a few lines thus modified:—

> Let me love thee, Humanity, more than myself, and myself only for thee.
>
> The noble love of Humanity impelleth us to do great things, and exciteth us always to desire that which is more perfect.
>
> Make no great account of who may be for thee or against thee; but mind and take care that Humanity be with thee in everything thou doest.

And so in the case of Dante.[3] The Italian poet's epic

[1] Died in Paris, 1747, at the age of thirty-two. He was greatly admired by Voltaire.

[2] That is, representative of the Middle Ages. Strictly speaking, A Kempis (d. 1471) was post-mediæval.

[3] B. 1265, d. 1321.

should be valued, not as a literally true description of the three worlds beyond—Hell, Purgatory, Paradise—but as the completest possible ethical survey by a mediæval thinker. When Dante described the horrors of the Inferno, the agonies of Purgatory, and the joys of Heaven, he was but a forerunner of such men as Comte, who damn the poverty and vices of civilization, trace the sorrows of its progress, and point to a re-building and re-organization. Beatrice led Dante to the Highest Realm, and showed him the mansions of the white-robed Blest like a vast Rose :—

> .....How wide the leaves,
> Extended to their utmost, of this Rose,
> Whose lowest step embosoms such a space
> Of ample radiance! Yet, nor amplitude
> Nor height impeded, but my view with ease
> Took in the full dimensions of that joy.....
> Beatrice led me; and, "Behold," she said,
> "This fair assemblage; stoles of snowy white,
> How numberless. The city, where we dwell,
> Behold how vast."—*Paradise*, canto xxx.

Comte, like More before him and many a Utopian still to come, would, in Dante's spirit, though not in Dante's theological terms, construct a new social polity.

In February, 1848, Clothilde's mother died, and was buried beside her daughter. The father followed in 1855.

The February (1848) Revolution in Paris turned Louis Philippe out of France and placed Arago and Marrast in the Provisional Government. Comte took no part in the movement; but, seeing his old enemy lifted to a very grave responsibility, he so far relented as to express in public print a desire to make peace. Arago, however, made no response. During the political changes in the summer Littré made an attempt to persuade the Republican leaders to found a Chair of the Philosophical History of the Sciences, and to instal

Comte; but he failed. The Revolution stormed past Comte's doors, and aroused him to many reflections, but brought no personal aid. Sophie shrewdly remarked that "Philosophers must face swords, but not carry them."

In March Comte founded the Positivist Society; and presently we hear of Magnin reading a paper to the Society (at 10 rue Monsieur-le-Prince) on the Labour question, and recommending government aid to the workers. It was about the date of the establishment of National Workshops on the proposal of Louis Blanc. At this time, also, there appeared in Paris a French translation of Karl Marx and F. Engels's "Communist Manifesto." It had just previously been published in German in London. Its final call, "Working men of all countries, unite!", was to become famous.

At this crisis Comte issued his *General View of Positivism* (July, 1848),[1] and a passage on the last page must have caught many a thoughtful Frenchman's eye:—

> The more zealous theological partisans, whether Royalists, Aristocrats, or Democrats, have now for a long time been insincere. God to them is but the nominal chief of a hypocritical conspiracy, a conspiracy which is even more contemptible than it is odious. Their object is to keep the people from all great social improvements by assuring them that they will find compensation for their miseries in an imaginary future life. The doctrine is already falling into discredit among the working classes everywhere throughout the West, especially in Paris. All theological tendencies, whether Catholic, Protestant, or Deist, really serve to prolong and aggravate our moral anarchy, because they hinder the diffusion of

[1] English translation, now in cheap form, by Dr. J. H. Bridges (b. 1832, d. 1906), one of the most eminent of English Positivists.

> that social sympathy and breadth of view without which we can never attain fixity of principle and regularity of life.....There are now but two camps —the camp of reaction and anarchy, which acknowledges more or less distinctly the direction of God; the camp of construction and progress, which is wholly devoted to Humanity.

And it should be observed that the title-page of the book bore three mottoes, as follows, the first being unmistakeable in its purport: "Reorganization, without God or King, by the systematic cult of Humanity"; "Man's only right is to do his duty"; and "The Intellect should always be the servant of the Heart, and should never be its slave."

The main lines of Comte's scientific system are repeated in this book, with insistence on the principle that all departments of our knowledge are really component parts of one and the same science—namely, the Science of Humanity. In social life Progress should be regarded as Order made manifest, as the object of Order, as the Development of Order.[1] Order and Progress depend upon the co-operation of four social powers—womanhood, labour (working men), organizing directors, and philosophers, considered not as fixed castes, but as moral and material agents. Otherwise, we may call them Women, Proletariat, Patriciat, Priests; yet again, (1) Women as representatives of Humanity; (2) Working men as agents in the exploitation of natural resources; (3) Organizers as ministers of the social capital and as political rulers; (4) Thinkers, interpreters of history, counsellors in the present, forelookers towards the future, educators.[2] Of education Comte sketched a bold pro-

[1] The flag of the Brazilian Republic was inscribed, under Positivist influence, with the motto (still retained) *Order and Progress.*

[2] "The science of sociology was born when, in a moment of inspiration, Auguste Comte, the philosopher, saw the long record of

gramme—moral and æsthetic training under the mother's supervision till the age of fourteen; scientific lectures for all adolescents of both sexes, to age twenty-one, by the competent Intellectuals. "The two great requirements of the working classes are the organization of education and the organization of labour." Comte does not abolish the Capitalist in the twentieth-century Socialist sense; but he subordinates both the wage-earner and the minister or steward of Capital to the social service. Both are practical providences, meeting physical needs; "the chief object of Humanity's practical life being to satisfy the wants of our physical nature—wants which necessitate continual reproduction of materials in sufficient quantities."[1] We cite here a brief fragment on the duty of the ministers or stewards:—

> Capitalists, as the normal administrators of the common fund of wealth.....must so regulate the distribution of wages that women shall be released from work;[2] and they must see that proper remuneration is given for intellectual labour. To exact the performance of these conditions seems no easy task; yet until they are satisfied the equilibrium of our social economy will remain unstable. The institution of property can be maintained no longer upon the untenable ground of personal right. Its present possessors may probably decline to accept these principles.[3] In that case their functions will pass in one way or other to new organs until Humanity finds servants who will not shirk their fundamental duties, but who will

human history as a conflict and co-operation of these four social types: People, Chiefs, Intellectuals, and Emotionalists" (*Victor Branford*). Patrick Geddes and Branford, co-editors of the *Making of the Future* (1917–20), are much influenced by Comte.

[1] At this point one sees a certain approach of Karl Marx's Materialist Basis of History to Comte's doctrine. Otherwise, the two thinkers walked along different paths.

[2] Not from social service, but from wage earning.

[3] They did!

> recognize them as the first condition of their tenure of power.

Having discussed Positivism in relation to Intellect, People, Women, and Art, Comte concludes that "Love is our principle, Order our basis, and Progress our end." Hence—

> In the great conception of Humanity we find a centre towards which every aspect of Positivism naturally converges. By it the conception of God will be entirely superseded.....The new doctrine becomes at once accessible to men's hearts in its full extent and application. From their hearts it will penetrate their minds, and thus the immediate necessity of beginning with a long and difficult course of study is avoided, though this must of course be always indispensable for its systematic teachers.....Our thoughts will be devoted to the knowledge of Humanity, our affections to her love, our actions to her service.....Thus Positivism becomes, in the true sense of the word, a Religion; the only religion which is real and complete; destined therefore to displace all imperfect and provisional systems resting on the primitive basis of theology.

England was not forgotten by our ardent reformer. He wrote a letter to Sir Robert Peel, urging that, though this country seemed unready for the final regeneration, the political leaders should be all the more alert to perceive the crisis. Comte also wrote to an English correspondent, reproving him for the Imperialist proposal that England should "govern the human race," and broadly advising that she should start on another road by surrendering Gibraltar to Spain!

But while Comte, like Shelley's poets, was legislating for the world, his income was fearfully precarious. The landlord of No. 10 more than once allowed much delay in paying the rent. Sophie Bliaux (Madame Martin Thomas) came to the harassed Positivist one day,

accompanied by her husband; and the honest pair, with the utmost sincerity, begged him to accept the loan of their savings—600 francs; and they had now two small sons to provide for! Comte complied; and the debt, with interest, was repaid by the executors after his death. But when the Institution Laville dismissed Comte his friend Littré came to the rescue, roused interest among intellectuals and workmen alike, and so established the Fund which both enabled Comte to live in reasonable comfort to the close of his life and allowed the continued pension to the separated wife. Annual printed circulars of appeal were sent out.[1]

The Popular Astronomy lectures died with the 1848 Revolution, no hall being available. But Comte attacked at a fresh point, and for three years in succession (1849, 1850, 1851) gave Sunday afternoon lectures on the Religion of Humanity to audiences of women, students, and working-men in a hall at the Palais-Cardinal.[2] Among the group of ladies who regularly attended Caroline Comte appeared. In 1850, when a difficulty arose in connection with the permission to use the hall, she exerted herself among official acquaintances, and the obstacle was removed. Her husband courteously acknowledged the service, but otherwise retained his rigid aloofness. During these courses Comte tried to popularize the term Sociocracy, as denoting a social system governed by the Humanist faith;[3] and he also brought to public notice his now well-known table of

[1] The results were, in 1849, 3,000 francs; in 1850, 3,300; in 1851, 4,200; in 1852, 5,600; and so on.

[2] Built by Cardinal Richelieu; burned down in 1871. Émile Ollivier, who was Premier at the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War, was one of Comte's audience, and left an interesting account of the lectures.

[3] Neither *Sociocracy* nor *Sociocrat* has passed into use like the term "Sociology"; but the claim of these words, at any rate for use in political discussion, is considerable.

558 worthies, entitled *The Positivist Calendar adapted to all years equally, or Concrete View of the Preparatory Period of Man's History; especially intended for the transition through which the Western Republic has to pass; the Republic which, since Charlemagne, has been formed by the free cohesion of the five leading populations—the French, Italian, Spanish, British, and German.*[1] This remarkable document divides the names among thirteen months (of twenty-eight days each, with a "Day of All the Dead" to complete 365) under the names, in historical order, of Moses, Homer, Aristotle, Archimedes, Cæsar, S. Paul, Charlemagne, Dante, Gutenberg, Shakespeare, Descartes, Frederick, Bichat. In an early draft the name of Jesus Christ was included. A lively discussion took place on this subject at the Positivist Society. Comte at last said: "Since he ranked himself as God, let him so remain!"—and the type was deleted from the list. It should, however, be observed that the Evangelic story forms a distinct element in the Calendar, two gospels being implied in the type-names of "S. John" and "S. Luke"; and the whole Catholic theology is symbolized by leading saints and doctors. It was of this Table that J. S. Mill remarked: "A more comprehensive, and, in the primitive sense of the term, more catholic, sympathy and reverence towards real worth, and every kind of service to humanity, we have not met with in any thinker."

Among acquaintances formed in 1849–50 two should be specially named—Alexander Bain, the Aberdeen professor,[2] and Richard Congreve;[3] the latter becoming a

[1] In 1892 Frederic Harrison edited the *New Calendar of Great Men*—that is, Comte's Calendar, with biographies of all the worthies. This book is a standard historical work.

[2] B. 1818, d. 1903; friend of Grote and the two Mills; author of *Mental and Moral Science*, etc.

[3] B. 1818, d. 1899; tutor at Oxford till 1855; with Harrison and

devoted follower, whom we shall encounter again. Comte's staunch friend Blainville died in May, 1850. Various scientific persons made speeches at the funeral, and when Comte stepped forward with his grave "Messieurs,—After all these official manifestations of respect, perhaps you"—they shuffled and vanished! He gave the small remaining audience a most judicious and frank estimate of the biologist's merits and defects, and closed with the unorthodox declaration that "Science in the Middle Ages was essentially subject to the religion of God. Reason and morality now call for its far completer subjection to the Religion of Humanity."[1] As friends passed, others arrived: for example, J. Lonchampt,[2] who years later glanced back and said:—

> How impatiently we looked forward to the Wednesday evenings to see once more our Master, and take part in the meetings of the Positivist Society. With what emotions did we devour each large volume of the *Politics*. Auguste Comte and his work absorbed seven years of my youth, from the middle of October, 1850, to September 5, 1857.

Comte at this time announced to his inner circle that he would treat Sophie as his adopted daughter.

Dr. Robinet, who knew Comte intimately and wrote a biography of him, has pictured the philosopher's habits. He rose at 5 a.m. and went to bed at 10 p.m. The day began with those earnest recitations which he rightly called "Prayers," in the sense of psychological expansion and uplift of heart.[3] On Wednesdays, unfailingly, he

others, formed a Positivist group at 19 Chapel Street, Lamb's Conduit Street, Holborn, in 1870; from 1879 to 1899 acted as leader there of a Church of Humanity. His chief successor was Mr. Philip Thomas, who retired in 1920. The London Positivist Society is now linked with the Chapel Street Church.

[1] Blainville's name is enrolled in the Calendar.

[2] Biographer of Comte; d. 1890.

[3] "We cannot," he once said, "solemnly wish to be more

visited Clothilde's tomb, and the Society met in one of his rooms on Wednesday evenings. Other evenings, 7 to 9 o'clock, were devoted to the reception of friends. He had two meals a day, milk forming a chief item in the earlier, the second (dinner) being more substantial. Dinner ended with the eating of a piece of dry bread, in token of thought for the multitudes whose food was scant. Our readers will recall James Hamilton's description of Comte in 1838-39. The young Scotsman had visited his former tutor about 1841, and presented him with a Cumnock snuff-box, adorned with Ayrshire pebbles, though he found that Comte had abandoned snuff-taking. Hamilton's account proceeds:—

> It was not till 1851 that I again saw him. He was then the acknowledged chief of a school, and renowned, if not admired, among all thinkers. I had some little trouble in finding his abode, and it was with a beating heart that I pulled the bell-string. An old gentleman in a dressing-gown, with a black neckerchief strung round his throat, opened the door. I almost thought I had misunderstood the porter's directions. "Monsieur Comte?" I inquiringly said.
>
> "It is I, sir," was the answer.
>
> The change in his appearance intimidated me, and I hesitatingly mentioned my name. At once he put out his hand, and drew me into his sitting-room. Here I was able to remark the wonderful change which had come over his expression since we had last met. He now reminded me of one of those mediæval pictures which represent St. Francis wedded to Poverty. There was a mildness in those attenuated features that might be called ideal rather than human; through the half-closed eyes there

courageous, more prudent, or more resolute, without improving ourselves in those directions, if only through recognizing our weaknesses."

shone the very soul of him who had doubted whether he had anything more than intellect. "I did not recognize you," he said, opening a drawer; "but I think of you almost daily. See, I still have your box, and I keep my seals in it, so that I am often reminded of you." He spoke unreservedly of the honourable poverty to which the last revolution, in depriving him of his modest competence, had reduced him, and he told me how the generous sacrifices of some of his disciples had relieved him of the cares of material existence.

He indulged me with a long conversation, every word of which filled me with fresh wonder. He was no longer the rigid thinker, regular and passionless as mechanism; he seemed to have renewed his youth, to have added something to his former self, but how or what I could not at the time imagine. In terms unintelligible to me he referred to relations which had given impulse to his affections; he spoke with enthusiasm of the Italian poets, and of Shakespeare and Milton, whose works he had learned to read in the original; and—O surprise!—taking from his chimney-piece a well-thumbed copy of the *Imitation*, he said: "I read some pages of this book every morning."

Hamilton learned from Comte's writings the story of Clothilde's influence.

Congreve was another visitor, and on one occasion highly praised Thomas Carlyle. Several interviews with a gifted young American, Wallace of Philadelphia, encouraged Comte in the hope that his doctrine might find a good reception in the United States.[1] Ireland contributed her homage in the persons of three men who corresponded with Comte and saw him in Paris (1852–57).

[1] The Calendar contained the names of Washington, Franklin, Jefferson, Madison, Fulton; and we may add that the name of Toussaint l'Ouverture worthily stood for the negro population of America.

One was H. D. Hutton, a lawyer, who persuaded Comte to enrol the name of Bunyan in the Calendar. The second was G. J. Allman, a distinguished mathematician. The third was Dr. J. K. Ingram, of Trinity College, Dublin. Ingram was an eminent scholar and economist, and a poet of merit.[1]

Louis Napoleon, whose ideas were tinged with Saint-Simonian doctrine, forcibly dissolved the French Assembly in 1851; and Comte, who had no love for Parliamentary phrase-mania (metaphysic!), quite approved. But he condemned the hereditary Empire (1852) as much as he condemned the abstraction known as "Sovereignty of the People." Both Parliamentarism and Imperialism seemed to him to check the healthy development of industry. The Revolution of 1789 had finely opened a new road. If only it had led the proletariat to a liberal education and material security; if only it had led the middle and upper classes to accept the duty of industrial direction for the good of the community! But company promotion, railway making, and other capitalistic enterprises, had exalted the worship of money and softened French virility through luxury and vulgar ease. Littré had been swept out of the Positivist circle by this imperial tide; he had no sympathy with Comte's stern detachment from Parliamentary Liberalism, or an Empire that promised Liberal measures. "You cannot see clearly," he said to Comte; "you go about asleep-awake"! Nor did he rejoin his old friends of rue Monsieur-le-Prince.[2]

Comte all the more energetically applied his heart and

[1] B. 1823, d. 1907; author of *History of Slavery* and *History of Political Economy*, etc.; he wrote the well-known lines beginning "Who fears to speak of Ninety-eight?"

[2] The Fund, of course, went on; and it was more needed, as Comte, in Nov., 1851, was deprived of his last office as tutor at the Polytechnic.

intellect to the elaboration of his *Positive Polities*, the four volumes of which (1851–54) we may now rapidly examine. But we may premise that, in the somewhat vain hope of rendering his views popular, he issued in 1852 a *Positivist Catechism*, in which his scheme of the Religion of Humanity was explained in thirteen Conversations between a woman disciple and a philosophic priest. But the style was not calculated to capture the imagination of either women or working men—for example:—

> *The Woman.*—In our second conversation, my father, you made me know Humanity. In the three following conversations you have taught me the worship we owe her. I ask you now to set before me the systematic co-ordination of the whole system of Positive doctrine around such an unity.
>
> *The Priest.*—You should, to that end, renounce first of all, my daughter, all aspirations after an absolute, external—in one word, an *objective* unity, which will be easier for you than for our professors! Such a wish, compatible with the inquiry into causes, is in contradiction with the study of laws, meaning by "laws" constant relations traced in the midst of immense variety. These admit only a purely relative—in one word, a *subjective* unity.

The opening of the *Catechism* (Preface), however, was blunt and even popular:—

> In the name of the Past and of the Future, the Servants of Humanity—theorists and practical men alike—come forward to claim as their due the general direction of this world, in order to build up at last the true Providence—moral, intellectual, and material—shutting out, once for all, from political leadership all the different Slaves of God—Catholic, Protestant, or Deist—as at once out-of-date and a source of trouble.[1]

[1] Comte told Dr. Audiffrent (one of his biographers) that the mention of Deists was an allusion to Mazzini's motto, "God and the People."

In the *Catechism* occurs the pregnant maxim, "Act from affection, and think in order to act," which sums up the three-fold duty of practical service, goodwill to men, and rationality.

The First Volume of the *Politics* repeated the "General View" of 1848, and added a survey of the scientific and logical bases, which are sufficiently familiar to us; and finishes thus:—

> Positive Philosophy stands before us as an orderly progression of conceptions, beginning with Cosmology, thence passing to Biology, and, finally, Sociology. Its two first terms [Cosmology, Biology] develop respectively the sense of Order and of Progress. It is in the last term alone [Sociology] that the two are harmoniously adjusted, under the continuous impulse of the fundamental feeling which prompts Each to live for Others.

A Table of Psychology, which still holds the field for practical value, was appended. Under the head "Principle," it stated seven personal motives in order of moral dignity—nutritive, sexual, maternal, military, constructive, ambitious, and the desire of praise; and three social motives—attachment, reverence, love (fraternity). Under the head "Means" it enumerated the rational activities—synthesis, analysis, generalization, systematization, expression. Under the head "Result" it noted the character-qualities—courage, prudence, perseverance.[1] The volume was headed by a motto from Alfred de Vigny's *Cinq Mars*: "What is a great life? A thought of youth realized by maturity." Clothilde's story of *Lucie* was appended—the most unconventional supplement ever tacked on to a philosophical treatise!

The Second Volume dealt with Human Order (Statics),

[1] Psychologists should remark this classification, which treats "character" as, strictly speaking, neither moral nor immoral.

beginning with a study of religion—that is, the "state of complete harmony peculiar to human life, in its collective as well as its individual form, when all the parts of life are ordered in their natural relations to each other." In this sense of personal and social harmony or health it may be said that "the history of religion should resume the entire history of human development." Positivism, therefore, is a fulfilling of tendencies which were in action for ages. Comte proceeded to analyse the conception of property, the nature of capital, and so on. It should be remarked that Comte treated Capital in its original meaning of things preserved for the increase of benefit, and hence his standpoint differed from that of Karl Marx's ruthless, though just, criticism. Family, language, and social organization in city, church, nation, etc., formed other topics. In discussing language Comte outlined a theory of logic or rational communication which has so far received far too little attention. He divided logic under three heads: Feeling, the earliest and most important, and often referred to metaphorically as "Heart"; Imagery, or the method of figure, metaphor, symbol, and imagination; and Signs—that is, the reduction of expression to words. It is, of course, this third division which is generally reckoned as the chief organ of reason. But words, injudiciously used with too little connection with imagination and sympathy, are apt to degenerate into expression without conception and metaphysical vagueness. In considering the parts played by the Spiritual Power (scientific and moral) and the Temporal Power (economic and political) Comte made the important distinction that the sphere of the Spiritual is universal; the sphere of the Temporal is restricted to regions, nations, etc. This led on to an examination of the work of the intellectual and ethical class (as priests, judges, educators, scientists) through the ages.

The Third Volume studied Social Dynamics, or the General Theory of Human Progress—in other words, it presented a Philosophy of History. It established the conception of Progress as "eternally subordinate to Order." Comte prefaced it with a print of his letter to the Czar Nicholas which showed that his confidence in the competence of the Russian autocracy was greater than time has since warranted. He gave the Czar a concise summary of Positivism, and one might almost suspect him of sarcasm when he interjected the remark that "In France my attitude as a philosopher is necessarily anomalous, because the unfitness of the upper class obliges me habitually to appeal to the lower; a course which gives a revolutionary colour to the best counsels. In Eastern Europe alone can enlightened theories now find chiefs disposed to appreciate and able to utilize them." We must bear in mind that in those days philosophers were fond of appealing to rulers. In 1831 Mazzini had addressed a letter to Charles Albert, King of Sardinia, begging him to renovate society! In any case Comte was right in wishing that both rulers and ruled would place a higher value on the interpretation of the Past. Note some of his thoughts in this Third Volume:—

> The distinctive characteristic of the present age will be the importance it assigns to history, by the light of which politics and even poetry will henceforth be pursued. This universal preference for the historical point of view is at once the essential principle of Positivism and its general result. True positivity consists above all things in substituting the Relative for the Absolute; its ascendancy therefore is completely established when we learn to see that the orderly change already recognized in the Objective World [that is, external nature] extends also to Humanity itself.....The real spectacle un-

> folded by history will never be properly appreciated but by those who profoundly venerate the Past as a whole.....It is only by the positive study of human progress as a whole that we can discover the real laws of the mind. When these are once found the individual furnishes the best verification of them, since the indivi lual and social growths must always be essentially similar.

Hence, in pondering history, we are collecting lessons that bear on psychology and education. Of course, since 1853 great areas of knowledge have been opened up, as, for instance, all those fields of manners and beliefs which are so richly illustrated in Sir J. G. Frazer's *Golden Bough*, and which are covered by Comte's term "Fetishism."[1] With such allowances made, it may be asserted that Comte's view of history—primitive fetishism; early polytheism and priesthoods; the Greek civic, artistic, and scientific ideas; the Roman social order; the Jewish monotheism; the Catholic-feudal transition; the Western revolution, Protestant, scientific, industrial, Rationalist—has never been surpassed in breadth of view and profound insight. In passing, and in relation to present-day controversies, we may point to Comte's doctrine of Fatherland. None more than he has glorified the large ideal of Humanity, but he emphasized the vital importance of City and Country:—

> The conception of Fatherland, at one time coextensive with that of home, is now in danger of being swallowed up in that of Humanity; and this error can only be remedied by Positivism, when it ultimately controls all aspirations after universal association, which are too vague to be practicable. .....As regards Humanity, the bond, owing to its

[1] Charles de Brosses (d. 1777) first used the term in a paper read, in 1757, before the Academy of Inscriptions of Paris. He adapted it from the Portuguese word *feitiço*, meaning a charm.

> universality, must always be mainly of an intellectual kind; and yet its material seat [the Earth] may exercise a really associative influence over us, notwithstanding its extent.....Still, however vivid and complete our notion of the Earth—first in its cosmic, then in its human relations—may become, our feelings will never be able to connect it with the evolution of our race, unless they are previously habituated to closer and narrower relations. This will always be the moral and intellectual function of the Fatherland, whose normal symbol is the City.

The Fourth Volume looked towards the Future of Man. In the Preface Comte avowed that he had spoken too harshly of Western statesmen in comparison with Eastern; and (though it should be recalled he disapproved of the attack on the Crimea) he was gratified at the *entente* between France and England in their defence of Turkey (1854). This volume gave Comte, with all the Positive apparatus at hand, the opportunity to pass judgment on the institutions of his day, and attempt a prevision of generations to come. It was a guide to Utopia, at times true, at times half-true, at times mistaken, at all times worthy of respect for its earnestness and sagacity. He did not anticipate the arrogant development of Germany, yet he assigned a just weight to the co-operation of the West in ensuring world-progress. He did not foresee the extraordinary material expansion of Japan, yet he suspected (as we do) that the Japanese were less prepared than China for the acceptance of the Humanist religion. He did not gauge the coming demand for an international yet neutral language (such, for example, as Esperanto), yet he insisted on the need of a universal tongue, and proposed Italian. And so one might go through a lengthy list of Comte's anticipations, setting them alongside to-day's realities, and never failing to detect elements

of wisdom even in his errors. We may terminate our hasty notice by referring to three features in this Fourth Volume. One is the Table of Sociolatry, or Social Worship, which, in divisions of thirteen months, displays a broad plan of historic institutions—Humanity, marriage, parenthood, son and daughterhood, fraternity, domesticity, fetishism, polytheism, monotheism, womanhood, priesthood, patriciat (material ministry through organization of banks, trade, manufacture, agriculture), and proletariat; this Table of Festivals being headed with the maxims, "Love for Principle, and Order for Basis; Progress for End," and "Live for others: Family, Country, Humanity."[1] The second is the series of Sacraments, or social Consecrations of the chief phases of normal individual careers—Presentation of infants, Initiation of girls and lads of fourteen, Admission to the adult community at twenty-one, Destination of men to specific vocations at twenty-eight (allowance having been made for previous changes), Marriage, Maturity at forty-two, Retirement at sixty-three, Transformation (from objective presence to affectionate memory) at death, and Incorporation, seven years after death, into the recognized public roll of the worthy. One sees at a glance that, apart from the intrinsic value of any such ceremonials, the essential idea is one of respect for the personality of every single citizen. The third feature is the Positivist Library for the Workmen of the Nineteenth Century—a selection of 150 volumes of Poetry (Iliad, Virgil, Dante, Shakespeare, Molière, Cervantes, etc.[2]), of Science, of History (Cook's *Voyages*, Voltaire's *Louis XIV*,

[1] Dr. F. H. Hayward (who acknowledges a measure of debt to Comte) has introduced an important festival element into his educational scheme in *Spiritual Foundations of Reconstruction* (1919) and *First Book of School Celebrations* (1920).

[2] Not forgetting *Tom Jones*! "Poetry" comprises epics, lyrics, drama, fiction, legends.

Bossuet, Gibbon, Herodotus, etc.), and Synthesis, or life-views (Aristotle, Bible, Koran, Aurelius's *Meditations*, etc.). In this case, of course, one attends to the method of choice of books, and not merely to the actual volumes.

No thoughtful reader can help being touched as he turns over the pages of this last part of the *Politics* and comes upon the passage in which Comte hopes he may attain, perhaps, a centenarian age like Fontenelle, and, surrounded by deputations from all the Western nations, witness at Paris the public inauguration of the Religion of Man.

Meanwhile, a pleasant gleam of triumph shone in the news that an Englishwoman had translated, in condensed form, the *Positive Philosophy*. A wealthy English gentleman, named Lombe, residing at Florence, had sent her £500 to cover expenses; and she did the work in two volumes. The translator was Harriet Martineau,[1] "an eminent woman" (said the grateful Comte) "whose heart is on a level with her intellect."[2] With G. H. Lewes's *Comte's Philosophy of the Sciences*, on the other hand, he was displeased on account of a little incense burned to theism.

At this period the artist Etex painted a picture of "Auguste Comte and his Three Angels," representing the philosopher writing at a table, and three women—his mother Rosalie, his friend Clothilde, and his household help, Sophie—silently inspiring and blessing his labour. Comte had his arrogancies and obstinacies, but

[1] B. 1802, d. 1876; author of *Feats on the Fiord* and *The Hour and the Man* (Toussaint l'Ouverture). The translation is now issued in three vols.

[2] In Oct., 1856, Comte's share of the proceeds of this publication was taken to him in Paris by Mr. Herbert Spencer. At the interview Comte advised Spencer to marry. Spencer has recorded his view of Comte: "Certainly his appearance was not in the least impressive either in figure or face.....his face was strongly marked."

his pleasure in this picture was very human and naïvely modest. His gravestone now bears the inscription "Auguste Comte and his Three Angels." Once he had a fancy that all might share the same tomb; but at least he hoped certain relics might lie in the last dust with him—the heart-shaped fold of Clothilde's hair, the little watch that had belonged to his mother, and the dress given by Clothilde to Sophie: and, "any enclosure being especially unsuitable for the philosopher whose maxim is *Live Openly*, the tomb is only to be surrounded by an iron railing, the two sides of which shall each be provided with a wooden bench with a back to it."

He could not write in the common folks' tongue; but the simplicity of his grave speaks to their heart.

VIII

LAST LABOURS AND VISIONS

On each New Year's Day disciples gathered respectfully to salute the "Founder," as they were now accustomed to call him. When women attended he was particularly glad. Often he regretted that women did not support the faith in larger numbers, and in the last page he wrote to Clothilde, October, 1856 (for he communed with her in imagination in an annual letter), he sorrowed that Positivism was not helped by any able woman's pen. The summer season would occasionally see him engaged in a ramble in the woods near Paris, accompanied by friends of both sexes. There was a fly in the ointment sometimes. He records a breach of fraternal relations between two of his "eminent adherents." "It lasted two months," he gloomily observes. In July, 1855, we find him sending news of himself to his aged father, and courteously hinting that he will now cease, out of respect, to address his father with *thee* and *thou*. Baron de Constant called on him with greetings from Holland. The Baron he describes as "the noble head of our incomparable Dutch group." Comte rather expected the rise of a group in England, especially after a visit (August, 1855) from George Jacob Holyoake.[1] Comte told a correspondent that Holyoake was "a man of thirty-eight, full of energy and sincerity, who appears to

[1] B. 1817, d. 1906; Owenite "Social Missionary," a pioneer of the Co-operative Movement, and Secularist; edited the *Reasoner* for many years.

exercise much influence among the British proletariat." But Holyoake never became a follower.[1] Others were more zealous. Mr. Fisher, of Manchester, would address the envelopes of his letters to Comte, "The venerable High Priest of Humanity."

In the same year Frederic Harrison[2] had a conversation with Comte lasting several hours. He describes the philosopher as short, big-headed, dignified, and courteous. Harrison having stated that he knew Positivism through Miss Martineau's translation, and that, at present, he still called himself Christian, Comte promptly questioned: "What have you done in science?" The visitor having answered "Almost nothing," Comte drily rejoined, "That accounts for your mental condition!" They chatted of Mazzini, Napoleon, democracy, and many another topic of the day. "No man," says Harrison, "I have ever seen, unless Mazzini, was so impressive as a powerful personality and genius."

An *Appeal to the Conservatives* appeared in August, 1855. By "Conservatives" Comte meant the thoughtful citizens who were, or tended to become, republican, and who yet wished to realize inevitable social changes by moderate and educative methods. In this concise sketch of his polity he again placed a strong accent on the Religion of Humanity. "Between Man and the World we need

[1] In 1901, just after his eighty-fourth birthday, Mr. Holyoake sent a note to a little monthly paper which I edited, the *Leicester Reasoner*, and said: "Among all modern Religions of Reason Positivism has a distinguished place.....As you agree with me in thinking Positivism has great merits, you will take in good part my wish to see it stand well in the estimation of your readers, though I am not of that persuasion myself."—F. J. G.

[2] B. 1831, and, happily, still with us (1920); Congreve was his tutor at Wadham College, Oxford; member of Trades Union Commission, 1867-69, watching the interests of the workers; President of English Positivist Committee, 1880-1905; author of *The Meaning of History*, *John Ruskin*, *Creed of a Layman*, *Oliver Cromwell*, etc.

SOPHIE BLIAUX
(Madame Martin Thomas)

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Humanity"; that is, the individual man rises to his richest and best life, not by a direct or even scientific study of outer nature, but by devotion to the vast Human Continuity and Fraternity. The word *Religion* signified love in the inward experience and faith towards the universe.[1] In this sense "Man becomes more and more religious." The influence of womanhood must be pre-eminent, the affectionate sex being the best personification of the "Great Being"—the one collective, historic life; and, in order to enable womanhood to exercise this moral suasion, "man must (economically) support woman." Large states and empires must be reduced to such small republican divisions (like Belgium or Sicily in size) as would most naturally foster religious and social development. In order to carry out their religious duties efficiently, the Positivist "clergy" must renounce temporal riches and live a simple life. Industrial captains and workers should co-operate on the principle that "attachment and veneration are most fitting for the general mass, while the quality most required in leaders, whether intellectual or practical, is devotedness [that is, to the common welfare], for devotedness needs great powers." The Middle Ages had left to the Modern Age a double problem—to incorporate the proletariat into harmonious social existence, and to substitute a demonstrable faith for an exhausted theology. Though he often criticized the Communists, he looked upon the worthier Communists as a surer support of a sound and moderate government than an egoist and frivolous bourgeois class. Comte reprinted the Calendar in the *Appeal*, and once

[1] By "faith" Comte implied such a study of natural laws as resulted in as clear as possible an understanding of the world-order, with brave submission to whatever in it is unavoidable, and with endeavour to modify, by patient and rational means, whatever is modifiable in the interest of Humanity.

more urged the educational value of study of and reverence towards the heroic and constructive souls in human evolution.

Just before Christmas Comte wrote an elaborate Will, and handed a copy to Laffitte, whom he chose as his successor in the Positivist leadership, and who was to be one of thirteen executors. He particularly desired them to see that his debts were paid, that Madame Comte's pension should be continued, that Madame Thomas (Sophie) should be comfortably maintained, and that his rooms at No. 10 rue Monsieur-le-Prince should be preserved, with the contents, as far as possible as he left them. Anticipating a change of French government in a Positivist direction, he nominated, for such an event, Magnin director of Finance, Hadéry (a business man) governor of the Interior, and Deullin (a banker) for the Exterior. Of course, the nomination was Utopian; but one notes how Comte selected a proletarian, a practical captain of industry, and a banker, and excluded the political types whose "metaphysic" he had so scathingly denounced.

Dr. Audiffrent, who was to write a biographical sketch of the Master, was much with him in 1856. It was to Audiffrent that he once wrote:—

> I thank you for remembering the poor negress who cherished your infancy, and I hope that your intimate worship will soon reserve for her a place in the customary group of your guardian angels.

To Audiffrent again:—

> I never see a poor working woman carrying a burden unsuited to her sex but I feel I must take from her a load appropriate only to mine.....To the greater part of women domestic life is only a Utopia. .....The Western situation will soon give rise to the Feminine problem, which is naturally associated with the Working-class problem.

In a letter to Baroness Marenholtz-Bülow he said:—

> So long as the independence and dignity of women are not guaranteed to the proletariat, Infants' Schools will remain a necessary evil. Meanwhile, it will be an excellent enterprise to transform these institutions into Kindergartens.[1]

Dr. Congreve published, on the subject of the proposed restitution of Gibraltar to Spain, a pamphlet[2] which very much gratified Comte. Congreve reviewed the history of the West, found no hope in the old European diplomacy, noted disquiet on all sides, felt that the need of Europe was peace and a new moral reorganization; therefore he advised England to lead the way in the better polity, and to symbolize this purer age by giving back Gibraltar. It might be anticipated that other European difficulties (such as the unity of Italy) would then be solved the more easily. We may remark that Comte also desired the restoration of Algiers to Arab rule. In general, he was anti-Imperialist; and his example was energetically followed by Positivists in connection with questions of India, Egypt, African exploitations, and the South African War.[3]

An interesting friendship with James Beaumont Winstanley, of Braunstone Hall, near Leicester, belongs to 1856. Winstanley was a young landlord who earnestly desired the betterment of the cottagers on his estate, and he held a lengthy consultation with Comte, at the close of which he knelt and kissed the

[1] Comte's preference was for home teaching under the direction of the mother to the age of fourteen. Popular education in all civilized nations has taken another turn; but the great part taken by women partly meets the principle which he stressed; and it is to be hoped that parents will be brought into increasingly closer contact with the institutions in which their children are trained.

[2] Reprinted in 1919. The title is *Gibraltar*.

[3] It may be as well to add that Positivists, as a body, supported the cause of the Allies and America in the Great War of 1914–18.

philosopher's hands, and he also saluted Clothilde's "altar." Comte afterwards wrote to him, encouraging the plan of building a superior type of cottages, with gardens, and even hinting that the town of Leicester might be adequately served by a Positivist Temple with "seven priests and three vicars." But the Braunstone villagers might meet at the Hall, after the manner of the neighbours who assembled at the residence of Comte's friend, Henri Edger, at Long Island, New York.[1]

Comte's last work was the *Subjective Synthesis*, the first volume of which was entitled "System of Positive Logic." He planned three other volumes, all illustrating Humanity as the real and unique centre (synthesis) of whatever science or philosophy had to reveal of truth, beauty, and goodness. The three others he did not live to execute. They would have dealt with "Positive Morals" as the basis of education (2 vols., 1858–59), and "Positive Industry, or Treatise of the whole action of Humanity on her Planet" (1861). He even projected a work on Philosophy (the Laws of Thought) for 1867.....

The book on Synthesis was dedicated to Comte's old Mathematics teacher at the Montpellier High School—namely, Daniel Encontre, whose serious face and Protestant black gown still appear in an oil portrait preserved at the Lycée. In the Preface, Comte described his vision of the Pantheon at Paris transformed into a temple of remembrance for the heroes and heroines of history; and a place would be given to the humble fifth-century virgin,

[1] The cottages were built. Unfortunately, young Winstanley died in 1862. As to Leicester (which, in 1919, became a city), I may record that I carried on a modest "Church of Humanity" there in 1908–10; and, being only one lecturer, I tried to epitomize the values of the seven priests and three vicars! Comte might have found my Positivism somewhat unorthodox, but might also have perceived that I was a profound admirer of his essential aims. —F. J. G.

S. Genevieve, who shielded the people of Paris from barbaric peril.[1] The Essay treats of the triple cosmos which is mirrored in the human consciousness:— (1) Humanity, the historic genius of our race (not forgetting the modest animal auxiliaries who render so much aid to man), and, in its noblest aspect, expressed in morality and benevolence: (2) the Earth which supplies us with dwelling, resources, and, on the mental side, the chief treasury of imagery, by which we clothe our thoughts in concrete figures and poetry; and (3) space so far as our capacities can penetrate; the space which Chinese philosophy called Heaven, and which modern hypothesis has filled with Ether; the vast Space which we may believe (though not prove) to be at least neutral, and perhaps, in a sense, benignant towards human life and evolution; the Space which mathematics accepts as a field for its number and geometry, and which astronomy teaches us to survey with wonder and delight. Human logic traverses three similar stages of vividness, for it begins with expression through the feelings of our basic Humanity; it invests its thought with world (earth) imagery; it thins itself away into abstractions, spatial terms, and, so to say, ethereal subtleties. And, all the time, man is himself the Synthesis of this threefold universe. His ethical life and his sociology are the central interest, and if we speak of "materialism" the word should mean that poor philosophy which values the merely spatial and physical above the humane, the social, the sympathetic. It is in the *Synthesis*, we may say in passing, that the maxim occurs, "Conciliatory in details, inflexible in principle."

What we have just described as Comte's view of the

[1] Wall-paintings by Puvis de Chavannes and others now adorn the Pantheon and display scenes in Genevieve's life.

Triple World is but the Introduction to the treatise on Logic. But, like Dante when he reached the Tenth Heaven, we feel this final flight beyond our ken. Comte would almost seem to have fallen into a mathematical reverie, and, through hundreds of pages, to pursue a lonely furrow of meditation in which few may venture to follow. But so fervently did he hold on to his principle, that the most abstract science must be servant to the human hope and love, that he based the composition on a kind of acrostic plan. In any one paragraph the initial letters of sentences spell (in French, English, Italian, Latin, etc.) some honoured name, such as Cromwell, or, in any case, some word in daily use and warm with daily connotation. For example, we open at page 531, choose a paragraph which discusses the Abstract and the Concrete, and observe the seven first letters of the seven first words of the seven sentences: 1, D'après; 2, Examinées: 3, Un; 4, Les; 5, Les; 6, Indépendamment; 7, Non—and we discover the name of Comte's beloved banker, Deullin! Or, on page 142, we pick out another paragraph, and from initial words —1, Bien; 2, On; 3, Néanmoins; 4, Tous; 5, Elle— we obtain the word "Bonté," or Kindness. Such a device might have charmed ancient Pythagoras, who traced a universal meaning in numbers, or Plato, who had an ear for the music of the spheres: and it may, perchance, hint to modern education that logic, which is so indispensable to an ordered life and politics, should be invested with a happier and more attractive guise for the child and the citizen.

He had yet another dream, which he trusted his disciple, Alfred Sabatier, might do something towards accomplishing. Sabatier interviewed the General of the Jesuit Order in Rome and mooted the possibility of drawing this central organization of the Catholic faith

towards the Human Catholicism which, though abolishing God, symbolized Humanity by the Mother and Child. Sabatier's embassy came to naught. Years afterwards a copy of the *Positivist Catechism* (with Comte's autograph dedication) which Sabatier handed to the General turned up, uncut, in a second-hand bookseller's 4d. box on the quays at Paris.

In April, 1857, Comte was much moved by news of the death of his old friend, Senator Vieillard. On the day of the funeral he set out on foot to attend the service fixed for a certain church, and then found the ceremony was transferred to another church. Knowing he would be too late for the service, he hurried to the cemetery, but only in time to find the mourners dispersing. The weather was chilly, the experience somewhat depressing; Comte caught a chill and passed a bad night. Dr. Robinet, his physician, afterwards traced the last illness to this unfortunate incident. An easier period in May was succeeded by stomach and liver trouble in June. The old insomnia revived. Yet it is curious that one of his very rare jests dates from this time of sickness. He was writing to friend Audiffrent, and told how he had read, after an interval of fifteen years, the concluding pages of his *Positive Philosophy;* and he found the stuff so dry that he hastened to catch up a volume of a favourite poet, Ariosto, and read a canto from that adventurous humorist! Another gleam of the jocular occurred in August. Comte had signs of dropsy, and suffered considerable distress. But he got up each day, received friends, and penned a very cheerful letter to his father, who had just entered his eighty-third year. Comte told of his illness, which would put off a hoped-for visit to Montpellier perhaps till 1862; and as Comte would himself be somewhat of an ancient by then, their friends at Montpellier would witness the pleasant

meeting of two old gentlemen—father and son! This letter was written on August 23.

Ulceration of the stomach was evident. Dr. Robinet warned the patient, whose movements were accompanied by pain.

Littré came to see his old leader in philosophy.....

A happier interview is recorded by Robinet. Comte talked to him of the Future of Mankind, of social progress, of the influence of the Religion of Humanity. The physician clasped Comte's thin hands and, with heart profoundly stirred, departed; and he saw the Master no more alive.

Through Friday night, September 4, and towards daybreak on September 5, Sophie and her husband watched.

"Go to bed, my children," he said; and they left the room, but remained near the door. Hearing him fall at five o'clock, they rushed in, and found him lying near Clothilde's chair; but he wished to stay where he was, with head on a cushion.

"In this way," he said, with a smile to Sophie, "I shall lie in my tomb."

At noon he let them assist him, with difficulty, to his bedroom and to bed. Now and then he drank a cool drink. Lonchampt—a very loyal friend—called, saw the meaning of it all, and hurried to send a telegram to Dr. Robinet; but the doctor was not at home. When he arrived Comte, who had once or twice opened his eyes to look at the flowers Clothilde's hands had wrought for him, was unconscious. At six-thirty a cry of grief from Sophie told that the much-enduring heart would beat no more.

In conformity with his own direction, the body lay exposed sixty hours, watched day and night by disciples—French, Dutch, and English. On September 8 (Tuesday) the procession left rue Monsieur-le-Prince.

The scarves of the funeral car were held by Magnin, Hadéry, Martin Thomas, and Robinet. A few neighbours followed, and a group of Positivists; and Sophie and other women in a coach. Among the friends was Proudhon, the famous and mordant critic of property and rent.

The grave was in a little valley where Comte had indicated to Laffitte, years before, he wished it to be—near that of the poetess who died all too young. On the way the hearse halted at the church of St.-Paul-St.-Louis, Rue St. Antoine, where, since November, 1854, Comte went every Saturday to spend a meditative half-hour and recall the day when he and Clothilde stood sponsors for her nephew. Dr. Robinet pronounced a brief address, closing with the motto: "Love for principle, and Order for basis; Progress for end."

To-day pilgrims to Père-Lachaise pause in reverence for a very great man, and read the inscription on the tombstone: "Auguste Comte and his Three Angels." But of the Three only Sophie lies in the same vault. Others in that silent companionship are Martin Thomas, Fabien Magnin, and Pierre Laffitte.

The reader will remember James Hamilton, from whom, for the last time, we quote:—

> In the beginning of last September I was again in Paris. As soon as I had fixed myself in lodgings in the same studious quarter in which I had first known him, I sought out the abode of my old master. It was an autumn evening when I stumbled into the gloomy *porte cochère* of his house. The porter was sitting on the sill of his lodge, knitting a worsted stocking in the twilight. "Is it here that Monsieur Comte lives?" was my question. "Yes, sir," answered the man, without rising or lifting his eyes from his work. "Is he at home?" "He was buried this afternoon."

> I never received a greater or more unexpected shock. His temperament and his healthy habits seemed to promise a long career; and the last time I had talked with him he had been speaking of the employments he had marked out for his old age, when he should be no longer capable of working at his philosophy, for he had rigorously determined the period when he should retire from what he considered his apostolate.[1]

When Fisher of Manchester addressed Comte as the Venerable High Priest, his instinct, even if, to English ears, singularly expressed, was entirely just. Comte, as he appeared to Fisher, Harrison, Congreve, Wallace of Philadelphia, Baron de Constant Rebecque of Holland, and the rest, effectively represented the new Spiritual Power — sympathetic, sagacious, scholarly, scientific, philosophic—which he declared to be indispensable to the future order and progress of human society. As a matter of fact, it is precisely this type of heart and mind that is now the pivot on which the world's re-organization is turning. The Great War of 1914–18 was the most striking proof possible of the long-drawn anarchy (transitional and fermenting, not desperate and final) which he traced from the close of the Middle Ages, though, to be sure, he was quite in error in supposing it would expire in his own lifetime, should he live to the age of Fontenelle. He saw that the Catholic theology (and, of course, the theologies of Islam, Hinduism, and Judaism), with its trust in the Absolute Will and Providence of God, failed to meet modern necessities. A scientific study of nature, a modest sense of the relativity of man's fate to time and circumstance, and

[1] As I approach the final page, I beg to give most cordial thanks to my friend Mr. Paul Descours, Hon. Secretary of the London Positivist Society, for the care with which he has examined these chapters and corrected inaccuracies.—F. J. G.

a courageous self-reliance, were vital elements of the new faith. And with the disappearance of the old dogmatic and arrogant Absolute must also disappear the competing and clamant sects. A catholic Humanism, or Religion of Humanity, would act as the spiritual bond of the future international league.

Between 1820 and 1860, as we have seen, Comte gave decisive vogue to the idea of social evolution, the continuity of civilization, the solidarity of mankind, and (to speak relatively) the immortality of all noble things created by the human genius. Receiving so much from this genius, it was a universal duty to contribute towards the development of its work and glory. "The obligation to serve is common to all." Every phase of the Past was held in honour, and the Calendars (one of persons, the other of phases and institutions) made the wonders of social evolution visible to our eyes. Even from tragedies we could derive fresh impulses of progress. Comte regarded the French Revolution, in spite of its mistakes and terrors, as the opening of an era, whose chronology (1789 the year 1) might displace that of the ancient Catholicism.

His evolutionary sense and his prevision fixed upon what we now call the Labour Movement and the Woman Movement (though he was neither Communist nor Suffragist) as essential developments in the post-French-Revolution world. None more than he has vehemently insisted on the need for all citizens and both sexes of an education which should be first moral and civic, then æsthetic, then intellectual and logical, and then practical and vocational. The militarist ideals of the Past were declining with their natural associate, the God-doctrine; and the coming industrial and pacific order must rest upon moderate-sized, self-governing republics, which would join in a world co-operation, with

an international navy, and with armies reduced to simple police forces (for, to Comte, "all government rests on force"). Such a co-operation was not a vague cosmopolitanism, such as some minds dreamed of in 1820–60, and some still in 1920. It rested on the bases of the Family, with its personal reverences (supported by the social "sacraments") and the City and Country, or Motherland,[1] illumined by the beauty and fellowship of frequent public festivals; and the leadership (in to-day's phrase, the "Entente") of the West would be a powerful aid towards the ultimate unity of mankind.

[1] A term which Comte finally preferred to Fatherland.

Appendix I

POSITIVIST CALENDAR,

ADAPTED TO ALL YEARS EQUALLY; OR,

CONCRETE VIEW OF THE PREPARATORY PERIOD OF MAN'S HISTORY,

especially intended for the final period of transition through which the Western Republic has to pass: the Republic which, since Charlemagne, has been formed by the free cohesion of the five leading populations, the French, Italian, Spanish, British, and German.

FIRST MONTH.

MOSES.

THEOCRATIC CIVILIZATION.

Prometheus.....*Cadmus.*	Fo-Hi.
Hercules ..... *Theseus.*	Lao-Tse.
Orpheus ..... *Tiresias.*	Meng-Tse.
Ulysses.	The Theocrats of Thibet.
Lycurgus.	The Theocrats of Japan.
Romulus.	Manco-Capac.*Tamehameha.*
NUMA.	CONFUCIUS.
Belus ..... *Semiramis.*	Abraham ..... *Joseph.*
Sesostris.	Samuel.
Manu.	Solomon .....*David.*
Cyrus.	Isaiah.
Zoroaster.	St. John the Baptist.
The Druids ..... *Ossian.*	Haroun-al-Raschid...*Abder-rahman III.*
BUDDHA.	MAHOMET.

The provisional era begins January 1, 1789.

January 1 (Moses 1) is always Monday, and so is the first day of each month.

The names in italics are those of the persons who in Leap-years take the place of their principals.

SECOND MONTH. HOMER. ANCIENT POETRY.	THIRD MONTH. ARISTOTLE. ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY.
Hesiod.	Anaximander.
Tyrtæus ..... *Sappho.*	Anaximenes.
Anacreon.	Heraclitus.
Pindar.	Anaxagoras.
Sophocles ..... *Euripides.*	Democritus ..... *Leucippus.*
Theocritus ..... *Longus.*	Herodotus.
ÆSCHYLUS.	THALES.
Scopas.	Solon.
Zeuxis.	Xenophanes.
Ictinus.	Empedocles.
Praxiteles.	Thucydides.
Lysippus.	Archytas ..... *Philolaus.*
Apelles.	Apollonius of Tyana.
PHIDIAS.	PYTHAGORAS.
Æsop ..... *Pilpay.*	Aristippus.
Plautus.	Antisthenes.
Terence ..... *Menander.*	Zeno.
Phædrus.	Cicero ... *Pliny the Younger*
Juvenal.	Epictetus ..... *Arrian.*
Lucian.	Tacitus.
ARISTOPHANES.	SOCRATES.
Ennius.	Xenocrates.
Lucretius.	Philo of Alexandria.
Horace.	St. John the Evangelist.
Tibullus.	St. Justin ..... *St. Irenæus.*
Ovid.	St. Clement of Alexandria.
Lucan.	Origen ..... *Tertullian.*
VIRGIL.	PLATO.

FOURTH MONTH. ARCHIMEDES. ANCIENT SCIENCE.	FIFTH MONTH. CÆSAR. MILITARY CIVILIZATION.
Theophrastus.	Miltiades.
Herophilus.	Leonidas.
Erasistratus.	Aristides.
Celsus.	Cimon.
Galen.	Xenophon.
Avicenna ..... *Averrhoes.*	Phocion ..... *Epaminondas.*
HIPPOCRATES.	THEMISTOCLES.
Euclid.	Pericles.
Aristæus.	Philip.
Theodosius of Bithynia.	Demosthenes.
Hero ..... *Ctesibius.*	Ptolemy Lagus.
Pappus.	Philopœmen.
Diophantus.	Polybius.
APOLLONIUS.	ALEXANDER.
Eudoxus ..... *Aratus.*	Junius Brutus.
Pytheas..... *Nearchus.*	Camillus ..... *Cincinnatus.*
Aristarchus..... *Berosus.*	Fabricius.....*Regulus.*
Eratosthenes..... *Sosigenes.*	Hannibal.
Ptolemy.	Paulus Æmilius.
Albategnius...*Nasir-Eddin.*	Marius .....*The Gracchi.*
HIPPARCHUS.	SCIPIO.
Varro.	Augustus ..... *Mæcenas.*
Columella.	Vespasian ..... *Titus.*
Vitruvius.	Hadrian ..... *Nerva.*
Strabo.	Antoninus. *Marcus Aurelius.*
Frontinus.	Papinian ..... *Ulpian.*
Plutarch.	Alexander Severus...*Aetius.*
PLINY THE ELDER.	TRAJAN.

SIXTH MONTH. ST. PAUL. CATHOLICISM.	SEVENTH MONTH. CHARLEMAGNE. FEUDAL CIVILIZATION.
St. Luke ..... *St. James.*	Theodoric the Great.
St. Cyprian.	Pelayo.
St. Athanasius.	Otho the Great...*Henry the*
St. Jerome.	St. Henry [*Fowler.*
St. Ambrose.	Villiers.....*La Valette.*
St. Monica.	Don John of Austria...*John*
ST. AUGUSTIN.	ALFRED. [*Sobieski.*
Constantine.	Charles Martel.
Theodosius.	The Cid ..... *Tancred.*
St. Chrysostom... *St. Basil.*	Richard I.....*Saladin.*
St. Pulcheria..... *Marcian.*	Joan of Arc..... *Marina.*
St. Genevieve of Paris.	Albuquerque.*Sir W. Raleigh.*
St. Gregory the Great.	Bayard.
HILDEBRAND.	GODFREY.
St. Benedict ... *St. Antony.*	St. Leo the Great...*Leo IV.*
St. Boniface ... *St. Austin.*	Gerbert..... *Peter Damian.*
St. Isidore of Seville.....*St. Bruno.*	Peter the Hermit.
Lanfranc..... *St. Anselm.*	[*gius.*
Heloise ..... *Beatrice.*	Suger.....*St. Eli-*
Architects of Middle Ages... *St. Benezet.*	Alexander III ..... *Becket.*
ST. BERNARD.	St. Francis of Assisi...*St. Dominic.*
	INNOCENT III.
St. Francis Xavier...*Ignatius Loyola.*	St. Clotilde.
St. Ch. Borromeo...*Fredk. Borromeo.*	St. Bathilda.. *St. Mathilda of Tuscany.*
St. Theresa...*St. Catharine of Siena.*	St. Stephen of Hungary... *Mathias Corvinus.*
St. Vincent de Paul...*The Abbé de l'Epée.*	St. Elizabeth of Hungary.
Bourdaloue..*Claude Fleury.*	Blanche of Castile.
W. Penn ..... *G. Fox.*	St. Ferdinand III.*Alfonso X.*
BOSSUET.	ST. LOUIS.

EIGHTH MONTH. DANTE. MODERN EPIC POETRY.	NINTH MONTH. GUTENBERG. MODERN INDUSTRY.
The Troubadours.	Marco Polo.....*Chardin.*
Boccaccio ..... *Chaucer.*	Jacques Cœur.....*Gresham.*
Rabelais ..... *Swift.*	Vasco da Gama...*Magellan.*
Cervantes.	Napier ..... *Briggs.*
La Fontaine ..... *Burns.*	Lacaille.....*Delambre.*
De Foe.....*Goldsmith.*	Cook.....*Tasman.*
ARIOSTO.	COLUMBUS.
Leonardo da Vinci...*Titian.*	Benvenuto Cellini.
Michael Angelo.....*Paul Veronese.*	Amontons..... *Wheatstone.*
Holbein ..... *Rembrandt.*	Harrison..... *Pierre Leroy.*
Poussin ..... *Lesueur.*	Dolland..... *Graham.*
Velasquez.....*Murillo.*	Arkwright..... *Jacquard.*
Teniers..... *Rubens.*	Conté.
RAPHAEL.	VAUCANSON.
Froissart.....*Joinville.*	Stevin ..... *Torricelli.*
Camoens ..... *Spenser.*	Mariotte..... *Boyle.*
The Spanish Romancers.	Papin ..... *Worcester.*
Chateaubriand.	Black.
Walter Scott..... *Cooper.*	Jouffroy.....*Fulton.*
Manzoni.	Dalton ..... *Thilorier.*
TASSO.	WATT.
Petrarca.	Bernard de Palissy.
Thomas à Kempis...*Louis of Granada and Bunyan.*	Guglielmini ..... *Riquet.*
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Additional Day in Leap-years...Festival of NOBLE WOMEN.

Appendix II

WORKS BY AUGUSTE COMTE

[As Comte's works are sufficiently described in the preceding biography, no annotations are here given beyond references to the pages on which the works are commented upon in the present volume. The English editions can all be obtained through Messrs. Watts & Co. (17 Johnson's Court, Fleet Street, London, E.C.4). Should any difficulty be met in procuring French editions through the usual foreign booksellers, inquiries might be addressed to the Secretary, London Positivist Society, 19 Chapel Street, Lamb's Conduit Street, London, W.C.1.]

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